

## **DOCTORAL THESIS**

### **Dance, Empowerment and Spirituality An ethnography of Movement Medicine**

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# Dance, Empowerment and Spirituality. An ethnography of Movement Medicine.

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of PhD

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“We should not lose the mystery and magic of dance, the anima mundi of our body in its continuity with nature, culture, and community.”

(Sondra Fraleigh, 2000: 55)

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## Abstract

This thesis offers the first anthropological description of *Movement Medicine*, a contemporary movement meditation practice that blends together and is informed by different ingredients such as ecstatic dance, shamanism, voice work, and psychotherapeutic elements. Both the practice and the thesis emphasise movement, relationship with self, others and the world, ritual and ceremony. My argument is that the combination of different traditions that inform the practice, together with its metaphoric language and use of a variety of symbols opens different ways of viewing and managing life processes, so contributing to experiences of expanded consciousness and a sense of reconnection. The dance enables an integration of opposites and the creation of a new frame of meaning or reference.

The motivation behind this study is a curiosity about people's search for meaning and (self-)understanding in western culture at this time. With the decline of traditional religious frameworks, the focus of this search has changed, leading to the remarkable rise of so called alternative spiritualities. Having danced all my life and being a *Movement Medicine* participant myself, I am particularly intrigued by the role that dance can play in dealing with the increasing demands of a fast and often fragmented world.

Through a combination of hermeneutic and ethnographic methodologies, which include over five years of participant observation, 25 qualitative interviews and analysis of 190 articles in three volumes of the 'School of Movement Medicine's' newsletter, I provide an analysis of people's experiences to elucidate the mechanisms and contributions of this practice to the participants' wellbeing, their personal growth and their experience of spirituality.

In the first part of the thesis (Introduction, and Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4), I situate the practice within the socio-historic context of growth movements that have emerged since the 1960s, and explore the background of *Movement Medicine*, its

‘philosophy’ and symbols, aspects regarding the ‘School of Movement Medicine’ as a business, and the relation of the practice to other traditions and world views such as (neo-)shamanism and New Age. This also includes a detailed description of the practice in Chapter 4. After a brief Intermezzo, in the second part of the thesis (Chapters 5-8) I discuss the empirical data, describing how, according to participants, *Movement Medicine* contributes to personal growth and wellbeing in the areas of body, emotions, mind and spirituality.

Through this dance practice, people are able to experience anew their own embodiment and connection to others, and this has an empowering, healing and transformational impact on their sense of self. The insights gleaned through the practice do not remain within the confines of the studio but are integrated into participants’ daily lives in multiple ways, contributing to changes with regard to the body, self, relationships, work, values, actions and spirituality.

The thesis contributes to understanding what can constitute meaningful, transformative experiences and therefore has a wider relevance. It presents not just another example of the rise of alternative spiritualities and the continued search for meaning in western culture, but develops this understanding in a way that might also be applied to and implemented in settings such as schools, community centres and social care work, helping people deal with the demands of contemporary culture in a variety of situations.

## Chapter 1: Research turned inside out: on theory, methods and representation

### 1.1 Research questions and design

As explained in the Introduction, this research aimed to explore the elements and mechanisms of the *Movement Medicine* practice that make it relevant and meaningful for participants, and also to provide a first description and academic analysis of this practice. The main question leading the research was formulated as follows: “What, in the experience of participants, is the contribution of dancing *Movement Medicine* to physical, emotional and mental wellbeing, personal growth and spirituality?” (for sub questions, aims and objectives, please see Appendix A).

Originally I intended to compare *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> and *Movement Medicine*. This dual focus shifted to a focus on *Movement Medicine* only, largely as result of the creation of the ‘School of Movement Medicine’ in 2007. After this, there was no central body representing the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> in Europe,<sup>12</sup> which influenced my fieldwork, especially through the research informants I had access to, and the geographical situation. I chose to concentrate on one practice to allow for depth and understanding, rather than a more superficial analysis of two approaches. Also, no previous research had been conducted regarding *Movement Medicine*, while several studies considered *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup>. These will be discussed below. Finally, it was exciting to look at the emergence of a new movement, which I had the privilege to closely witness. Although of course it is difficult to say anything about possible future developments of *Movement Medicine*, its steady growth in six years seems to indicate that it is developing exponentially. Neither the research questions nor the methodology have been significantly altered by the shift from a comparative study to a study focussed on a single approach.

Intrigued by the power of dance in general, and this practice specifically, I sought to elucidate both the mechanisms of *Movement Medicine* and the processes

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<sup>12</sup> §2.3.1 discusses more details of *Movement Medicine*’s split off from *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup>.

it contributed to, in the lives of participants. A combination of observing fundamental changes in myself and fellow dancers after three years of practicing *Movement Medicine*, reading literature on related dance subjects, and informal conversations with *Movement Medicine* participants, led to formulating these specific areas of inquiry. I questioned whether it would at all be possible to ‘evaluate’ any actual, objective impact of a practice such as this, and reasoned that if participants thought the practice contributed to change, it was this belief that empowered them, even though the effect could have also been brought about by other factors. I therefore chose to focus on the meaning of the practice as described by participants in interviews and in the newsletter. Apart from comparing their stories with those of others and of myself, and observing, where possible, their body language and actions to see whether their behaviour was congruent with their narrative, I had no other means of ‘checking’ the validity of their answers. A longitudinal study or structured follow-up interviews were not possible considering the available time and budget. However, I always asked whether there could have been other reasons for the described changes, such as an additional activity or hobby, a significant change in their life structure (job, relationship, illness, healing). Sometimes this was the case, but most often they insisted that the dance was the main catalyst for the changes they experienced.

Some of the terms used in the main research question, need additional explanation. Firstly, the choice for words such as “physical, emotional and mental wellbeing and spirituality,” was based on my understanding of the literature during the initial phase of my research, in which these were highlighted as areas to which dance and movement possibly contributed (see for example Dexter Blackmer, 1989; D. Halprin, 2003; Hanna, 1987; Juhan, 2003; Lange, 1975; Noack, 1992; Picard, 2000; Taylor, 2007; Wilcox, 2005). For a discussion of the impact of any practice, but especially *Movement Medicine*, these four layers of experience needed to be addressed. Each of these, according to Daria Halprin, give us “access to our experience in a particular way” and are at the same time interconnected, and therefore influencing each other (D. Halprin, 2003: 104). Even if the dance would



only effect one of these levels, the other levels would be affected simultaneously because of their relatedness.

Furthermore, I have used the word ‘wellbeing’ in the sense of balance between those different levels, synonymous to ‘health’ and ‘quality of life’. This means that people are not only being able to perform daily activities (see for example Fanshel & Bush, 1970; W.H.O., 1998) but also have the ability to live a fulfilling life (Carr et al., 2001). Views on health in *Movement Medicine* are explained in more detail in §3.1.2.

Finally, the concept of ‘personal growth’ came up both in the literature and in my own experience as an aspect that dance in general could contribute to (see for example, but not exclusively, Cohen Bull, 1997; Dexter Blackmer, 1989; Picard, 2000; Taylor, 2007). I understand this concept in the sense of Jung’s ‘individuation’, “the process by which a person becomes a psychological “individual,” that is, a separate, indivisible unity or “whole” (Jung, 1971 [1959]: 275), which is a natural and inevitable process “in which the individual becomes what he always was” (ibid.: 40).

Special attention was paid to the role of embodied knowing, integration of aspects of the Self (body, emotions, mind, spirit), a sense of connection to people and the world around participants, and altered states of consciousness. Also, the practice is placed in a conceptual framework of ritual and bodily consciousness, discussing the contribution of *Movement Medicine* to contemporary society as one expression of alternative culture in which a growing number of people chooses to immerse themselves.

A study of the *Movement Medicine* practice demands interdisciplinarity (compare Juhan, 2003: 2). Because of my background,<sup>13</sup> anthropological literature and frameworks formed the starting point of this research, and are clearly visible in the study design, data collection and analysis. The theoretical background includes dance anthropology, symbolic and sensory anthropology, hermeneutics, and the multimodal framework (MMF). With regard to the definition of culture, the field,

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<sup>13</sup> I studied anthropology at *Leiden University* for three years (comparable to a B.A.), and obtained my M.A. at the *University of Amsterdam* in 2001. From 2000-2005, I worked as a social scientist at several universities and NGO’s in the Netherlands.

and the position of the researcher, I furthermore refer to ‘anthropology at home’ and the insider/outsider debate that is part of both anthropology and other qualitative inquiries in the social sciences. I used ethnographic tools such as participant observation and qualitative interviewing to gather and analyse data. Finally, I have been aware of the ‘crisis’ of representation in anthropology, and to some extent, I have drawn on the ideas and concepts of autoethnography. Each of these influences will be discussed in more detail in this chapter.

In general, anthropology is supportive of interdisciplinary approaches, and often draws on writings from other fields. Being aware of and borrowing loosely from different discourses of specific and general currents within anthropology,<sup>14</sup> as well as referring to discussions in other disciplines such as psychology, ecology and philosophy where necessary for understanding concepts, ideas and experiences of *Movement Medicine* participants,<sup>15</sup> I aim for a ‘good enough’ ethnography (Scheper-Hughes, 1992: 28), with respect to all of them. Although each has influenced this thesis, I do not aim for rigorous overviews, implementation or critique of any of them.

Before turning to a description of *Movement Medicine* in the next chapters, this chapter provides an overview of the theoretical background of this study, the methods to gather and analyse data, and concludes with some reflections on the process of writing and representation.

## 1.2 Anthropology of the Dance

Although dance has been incorporated in the work of early anthropologists such as Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, Boas, Mead and Evans-Pritchard, dance anthropology as a sub field within the discipline emerged only in the 1960s and

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<sup>14</sup> For example discourses that regard anthropology, fieldwork and culture as text (Geertz, 1973), as dialogue (Marcus & Fischer, 1999 [1986]) and as performance (Turner, 1987), but also different discourses on ritual, symbols, and representation (C. Bell, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> To give a few examples: when discussing ‘transformation’ I may refer to Jung’s writings in the field of psychology, the topic ‘embodiment’ will be compared to findings in philosophy, and for understanding participants’ motivation to make concrete changes in their life, it is useful to look at writings on activism and change, for example from an ecological perspective.

1970s (Grau, 1993: 21; Hanna, 1979: 314; Henry et al., 2000: 254-5; Thomas, 2003: 79). Although anthropology of dance (also called ‘dance ethnology’, ‘ethnochoreology’ and ‘anthropology of human movement’) has been disputed as representing a unified field (see for example Williams, 2004: 14), it does offer “the potential for investigating *any* dance in time and space within a broad theoretical and methodological framework” (Hanna, 1979: 316, italics in original, see also Grau, 1993: 21; Deirdre Sklar, 2001: 90). This includes key concepts, themes and notions of dance, assumptions about the nature of dance as a social fact, and a recognition of the relations between expressions of dance and cultural values, environment and politics (Grau, 1999: 165; Hanna, 1979: 323). Dance anthropology can be considered as “a specific way of looking at dance; its main concern [is] with understanding the nature of dance cross-culturally and with developing a discipline of dance arising out of the ‘thinking moving body’” (Grau, 1993: 24).

Defining dance is not easy, as it is not the universal concept it may at first seem (Grau, 1993: 24; Kaeppeler, 1978: 46-8; Thomas, 2003: 80). What is considered dance in some cultures is not recognised as such in others. Some languages do not have a distinct word for ‘dance’, because it is strongly intertwined with and inseparable from human movement and life (Kaeppeler, 1985: 92; A. Strathern, 1985: 120), or it is similar to words for music, game, play and song (Peterson Royce, 2002: 9). Therefore, definitions by dance scholars, and by dancers with their own specific cultural understanding, may differ (ibid.: 10). It is important to focus on what dance means to the participants (Thomas, 2003: 202) and dance can best be defined not as an entity in itself, but in its specific cultural context (Spencer, 1985: 38).

I would like to draw attention to two aspects present in most definitions of dance. Firstly the *relational* nature of dance is often emphasised. Whether it is a private, solo dance, or a performance for a large audience, the dancer is *always* in relationship. Being the instrument of the dance, the dancer is firstly in relation to self and the inner landscape, including emotions, ideology and understanding of cosmology. Furthermore, the dancer moves in concrete relationship with the earth (gravity), the sky (vertical alignment), air (breath) and space. And finally, the

dancer is, whether aware of it or not, always positioned in a network of social, cultural, environmental and even political relationships. Through the dance, these relationships are not only established and maintained, but possibly also transformed (Henry et al., 2000: 257).

Secondly, the *active* nature of dance is underlined in most definitions. It is a creative space, in which new meaning can be sought, found and created (Grau, 1999: 165, see also Brinson, 1985: 211), but also a “dynamic force in human social life deserving centre-stage attention in contemporary anthropological inquiry” (Henry et al., 2000: 259) which can contribute to decision making, change and transformation. With Henry et al. (2000), I see dance as “an intensely generative site in which cultural and social identities are being performed, contested, constructed and/or reformulated” and “a site in which there is continuous movement between political, personal, social and cosmological realms” (Henry et al., 2000: 256).

The word ‘dance’ refers to a huge variety of activities, and therefore many different purposes, motivations and explanations have been ascribed to dance. I have summarised the most common assumptions of “why people dance” in the table below:

- 
1. Evolutionary instincts and biological needs
  2. Emotional outlet and release (catharsis, safety valve, tension management, relieving overburdened feelings)
  3. Psychological and intellectual understanding, self-expression, imagination; an aid to decision making processes
  4. Accessing a special kind of knowledge
  5. Social diversion or recreation (fun, relaxation)
  6. Reflection of aesthetic values or aesthetic activity itself
  7. Religious and quasi-religious activity (including rites of passage, communitas, ecstatic communion, spirit possession, accessing other dimensions, direct communication with spirit and the divine)
  8. Creating, reproducing and maintaining identities of self and group (including displaying the body in ways that are less acceptable in other circumstances)

9. Reflection, validation and maintenance of social organisation, ideologies and worldviews (including dance as a means to social control and manipulation, education, competition, boundary display, pattern management (anti structure), adaptation to and integration of new situations)
10. Healing, change and transformation through self and/or through intervention of a specialist
11. Reflection of economic subsistence patterns or economic activity itself
12. Political engagement and action

*Table 1: Adapted from Blacking (1985), Ehrenreich (2007), Grau (1993: 23; 1999: 165), Henry et al. (2000: 256), Ikuta (2011), Peterson Royce (2002: 79-83), Spencer (1985), Thomas (2003: 79) and Williams (2004: 5-7).*

According to the prevailing ‘function’ of dance in a specific culture, it can be and has been studied from a variety of different perspectives, including evolutionary, functionalist, structural approaches; models from communication theory or linguistics; cross-cultural comparison; the culture and personality approach; phenomenological analysis; problem-oriented approach; and feminist perspectives (Hanna, 1979: 317-8; Peterson Royce, 2002: 19; Thomas, 2003: 79). Themes that dance anthropologists focus on include patterns of meaning, symbolic movements, nonverbal expression and communication, identity and agency, the body and bodily experiences, gender and sexuality (Grau, 1993: 24; Deirdre Sklar, 1991: 6; Thomas, 2003: 81). A study of dance raises issues of dance notation, embodiment, the relationship between spectators and dancers and the issue of ‘ownership’ in the case of performances or choreographies, specific movements to attain a certain state of consciousness, and the phenomenon in which the dancer is being danced or possessed by spirit or a deity. It also addresses issues of self-reflexivity and representing the ‘other’ (Boas, 1972; T. J. Buckland, 1999b; Desmond, 1997; Sondra Fraleigh & Hanstein, 1999; Lange, 1975; Peterson Royce, 2002; Deirdre Sklar, 1991; Thomas, 2003; Williams, 2004). The general anthropological concern with the difference between the lived experience, and its representation in text becomes even more poignant when the lived experience concerns bodies, dances or performances: “A concern with the bones ignores the flesh and the blood, the spirit and vitality of form. But a concern with the spirit alone disregards the skeleton

around which the form takes shape and which directs but does not determine the character of spirit and vitality” (Kapferer, 1986: 192, see also Sklar, 1991). This then requires the anthropologist to find a balance between form on the one hand, and spirit and vitality on the other. Because the body is the instrument of both the dancer and the dance researcher, the issue of situatedness is more immediate for a dance researcher, who is “constituted as a culturally situated embodied individual who has to approach the area of study in a self-reflexive manner” (Thomas, 2003: 81). This issue is further addressed in §1.10 on autoethnography.

Aside from difficulties in defining the subject matter and choosing a research paradigm, dance research encounters some other specific research challenges, especially with regard to language. Research participants may find it difficult to give voice to their understanding of what dance means to them, and the problem of translating sentient movement to verbal and written words without distortion of meaning is recognised (Blacking, 1985: 202; Thomas, 2003). Rather than trying to formulate a language into which all cross-cultural movements can be analysed, Blacking established that anthropology of dance should concern itself especially with indigenous explanations of dancers and spectators, paying specific attention to the language and metaphors they use in their experience and understanding of the context of a dance, while recognising that any description is approximate and subjective (Blacking, 1985: 64-6). It is good to remain aware of the fact that describing dance may depend on “another kind of reasoning, whose grammar and content are most effectively, though not exclusively, expressed in nonverbal language” (Blacking, 1985: 66).<sup>16</sup>

Not only are the contributions of anthropological theory and methodology to dance relevant, we can also underline what dance can contribute to anthropology (Brinson, 1985: 212; Henry et al., 2000: 257; Thomas, 2003: 84). Studies of dance and human movement “may actually assist in an understanding of the deep structure of a society and bring new insights into understanding other parts of culture” (Kaepler, 1978: 32), although the notion of seeing dance as a ‘mirror for culture’ has also been criticised (ibid.: 45). Brinson even goes a step further, by

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<sup>16</sup> He further adds: “discourse about dance, as about any nonverbal communication, really belongs to metaphysics, because it is, strictly speaking, an unknowable truth” (Blacking, 1985: 65).

claiming that not only the study of dance is “relevant to the analysis of social structure,” but “human society cannot be properly understood without reference to the sociology of human movement within which dance is constitutive and constituting” (Brinson, 1985: 212-3). Dance, as Blacking wrote, “may be a special form of knowledge, (...) whose practice can have implications for action beyond its immediate social uses and assigned meanings” (Blacking, 1985: 68). A dance style can also contain a culture’s “first principles and constituting a primary modelling system for thought and action” (Blacking, 1985: 90), and in that sense contain a root for the understanding of a culture (compare Grau, 1999: 166).

With the exceptions of (contact) improvisation (Carter, 2000; Novack, 1988a, 1988b), authentic movement (J. Adler, 2002; Pallaro, 1999; Taylor, 2007), and club cultures (F. Buckland, 2002; Gore, 1995, 1997; Rill, 2006; Sullivan, 2006; Sylvan, 2005), remarkably few studies have been done with regard to improvised social dancing. One of the reasons for this may be that improvised dancing does not have scores or recorded performances, and in that sense may be even harder to ‘grasp’ than other forms of dancing. As Fiona Buckland says, improvised social dancing is a verb rather than a noun, an activity rather than an object of knowledge, and does not exist outside of its participants (F. Buckland, 2002: 7, see also §4.8). Therefore, it is different from other social dances such as tango, morris dancing or square dancing. Also, there seem to be very few places or cultures where there is a tradition of improvised dancing, which therefore may not have developed in sufficient way for researchers to catch their attention. Furthermore, as it does not require any formal training and “anyone can do it,” it may be considered less valuable or having less status. However, the absence of choreographed steps and movements, opens a space where dancers can literally shake off conventional beliefs, ideas and behavioural patterns, and step into a more autonomously shaped “body of self-achieved power” (F. Buckland, 2002: 125):

By choosing to move in a certain place, in a certain way, we choose to restructure our consciousnesses in vital ways to which improvisation is central, not only as a personally expressive form, but as a method of creating a space with a powerful political imperative and a modelling of a method to achieve personal and political goals” (F. Buckland, 2002: 181).

An interesting question for further research would be whether the contributions of improvised dance to constructing and rehearsing new possibilities of behaviour for everyday life, a characteristic of dance recognised by many researchers of other dance fields, are even stronger than those of dance forms with more formal movement scores. Some of the advantages of improvisation are the possibilities to “discover something that could not be found in a systematic preconceived process” and to examine “a situation from various angles that can be invented in the very process of creation” (Carter, 2000: 182). Also, the limitless settings (other than the dance studio) in which dance can be improvised, create a very different relationship between the dancer and the environment (Carter, 2000: 188), which in turn, can affect the insights gained through dancing.

### **1.3 Related fields of dance research**

This thesis is the result of the first detailed academic study fully focussing on *Movement Medicine*, although the practice has been included by Carolina Naess in her M.A. thesis on different trance approaches (C. Naess, 2011, discussed in §1.3.1), and by Ali Young in her PhD thesis on Leadership at Exeter University (A. Young, 2013, discussed in §1.3.3). The *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> practice however, has been investigated from a variety perspectives: as tool for therapy (Haramati, 2008; Juhan, 2003), for healing and transformation (Hafner, 2008; S’Jegers, 2007), for corporate training (Hogya, 2004) and for research (Boyd, 2007). There are also two short reports on the use of *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> with regard to mental health issues in the UK (Brown, 2008; Cook et al., 2003). I will briefly summarise each of these contributions, and comment on similarities and differences with regard to my research.

#### **1.3.1 Therapy and Movement Education**

Andrea Juhan’s PhD dissertation describes the development of the Open Floor Process, a structure for ‘movement therapy ritual’ based on the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup>



practice, Gestalt Therapy and Integrative Body Psychotherapy (Juhan, 2003: iii). The thesis, in 'Interdisciplinary Studies', includes a literature review from somatic psychology, group psychotherapy, dance movement therapy and other forms of (expressive arts, action oriented) therapy (ibid.: 17-8), and outlines the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> in substantial detail. The research questions were straightforward, focussing on participants' experiences of dancing the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> and participating in the Open Floor format (Juhan, 2003: 9), which is similar to my research questions with regard to *Movement Medicine*.

Using her own 'unique blend' of phenomenological and heuristic methodology, she included herself and her own experiences in the research according to the phenomenological concept of 'immersion'. This encourages the researcher to 'live' the research question during daily life including sleep and dream states (ibid.: 223). She was also aware of intersubjectivity and the 'spirit of research as practice' (ibid.: 215-8), not dissimilar to the approach of Romanyshyn (2007) that I used in my work.

The actual empirical data gathering consisted of observation and experience during a ten day period including two weekend workshops and several classes in between, creating video footage at the same time. 27 people were interviewed briefly, six of which had an additional longer interview. Furthermore, the video footage and interviews, as well as additional written text by the research participants and an interview with Gabrielle Roth, were transcribed and analysed (Juhan, 2003: 230-1). Juhan explains the maps of the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> practice and the areas they cover as follows: Body, Emotions, Development, Ego and the place that connects these at the centre, called the 'still point' (ibid.: 126). She furthermore pays attention to relationship, sexuality and boundaries. In a section on spiritual orientation of the practice, Juhan describes elements of 'disappearing in the dance' with similarities to the ecstatic dance practice of the Sufis, 'shape-shifting' as a shamanic art that creates "a reorientation of one's identity" (ibid.: 94), and other shamanic influences on the practice such as rhythm and music, community, healing and states of heightened awareness, ritual and internal 'shadow lands' (ibid.: 98). Five major thematic areas emerged from her data on experience of *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup>: Moving (through a process, and moving as expression), Awareness (and the

development of it), Acceptance, Relationship to others, and Positive vibrations (including pleasure, joy, total presence, playfulness and freedom). From the data on the experience of the Open Floor Process, the following themes emerge: (fear of) being seen, embodiment, emergence of patterns and personal issues, universality, support and witnessing. She brings these areas together in a discussion of somatic psychology, dance and arts therapies, gestalt therapy and group therapies, and concludes that both the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> and the Open Floor process are “compelling tools for psychological healing and transformation.” She recognises at the same time that “these modalities are evolving and changing” (Juhan, 2003: 278-9).

Iris Haramati (2008) analyses *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> through the ‘Body- Movement-Mind Paradigm’ to investigate whether the practice can be used as an additional tool in movement therapy. She deduced movement qualities and their emotive-bodily aspects from watching DVD films on the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> produced by Gabrielle Roth, (particularly *'The Wave'* and *'The Power Wave'*, 2000) and her own experiences with the practice since 2002. She underlines that at no point throughout the research, she contacted the people she observed directly, and that her interpretation was based entirely on her analysis of movement patterns on screen (Haramati, 2008: 80). Her background is in movement therapy of which, as I understand it, the Body-Movement-Mind Paradigm is part. Therefore, her thesis contributes to the fields of expressive arts and movement therapy. She discusses in detail the relationship between *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> and therapy, acknowledging that although Gabrielle Roth, “believes in the healing power of movement and her intention is to help people on this healing path” (Haramati, 2008: 24), she herself does not advocate the practice as therapeutic. She describes how other *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> teachers, such as Andrea Juhan and Allain Allard, have begun to use the method in their own therapeutic work (Haramati, 2008: 24-5).<sup>17</sup> After a very thorough description of the movement qualities of each of the five rhythms, she concludes that the practice could indeed be used in movement therapy for “diagnostic

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<sup>17</sup> Again, it is important to stress that there is a distinction between ‘dance therapy’ and ‘therapeutic dance’ (Meekums, 2002; Penfield, 2001), and that neither the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> practice nor *Movement Medicine* is officially presented as such. Although therapeutic concepts can be used in order to understand the individual processes of participants, it is not the aim of this thesis to provide a detailed overview of the field of Dance Movement (Psycho)Therapy.

purposes, as part of the setting and therapeutic container, as a mediation tool for evoking emotional content, for expanding the emotive-movement repertoire, and as an auxiliary tool in therapeutic intervention” (Haramati, 2008: 220).

Carolina Naess (2011) has completed an M.A. thesis in Creative and Performing Arts on views and experiences of somatic awareness and embodiment in trance dance and Somatic Movement Education. Aside from literature review on dance practices that include trance and meditation, she interviewed various teachers of different trance dance practices as well as *Movement Medicine* participants after taking part in ‘The Long Dance’ workshop (July 2010). Also her own experience in participating in that same ‘Long Dance’ was part of the recorded data.

### ***1.3.2 Healing and Transformation***

With a research aim and findings very similar to my own, Kristina Maria Hafner’s M.A. thesis in anthropology (2008) places *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> in a ritual framework, referring amongst others, to Turner’s concepts of liminal space and *communitas*. Her work is based on eleven interviews and on her personal experience, using a qualitative methodology and phenomenological interpretation of her data. She discusses transformation in three different ways: as reshaping or conversion (‘Umformung’), as process, and as healing (Hafner, 2008: 58). She furthermore observes that the dance process leads to greater self-knowledge and self-acceptance, and increases authenticity and self-confidence, which she describes as having a positive effect on life experience (Hafner, 2008: 108). She considers the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> classes as a ritual space, as tool for personal growth, and pays attention to group dynamics and to a construction of reality and world view through the ‘landscape’ of the practice. She observes processes of integration and change in similar areas to the ones that have come up in my data: physical, psychological, social and cultural. Finally, she discusses transcendental, spiritual experiences, and an integration of ordinary and the transcendental aspects of life that participants previously considered as separate (Hafner, 2008: 127). One aspect that she pays attention to that I have only marginally addressed, is the topic of sexual identity. Her research participants considered the experience of erotic feelings as normal and

unproblematic (Hafner, 2008: 106). In the dance, participants learned about who they are through physical contact, danced with masculine and feminine archetypes, and in some cases reconsidered their sexual (hetero, homosexual or bi-sexual) identity. Similar again to my findings, the dance floor was seen as a field in which one can experiment safely, which can influence the (sexual) identity (Hafner, 2008: 108). She underlines that the result of the whole dance process lies in the integration, and concludes with the remark that dancers, with support of the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> practice can change limiting concepts about themselves and the world, and can live their lives in more authentic, meaningful, creative and inspired ways (Hafner, 2008: 136, my translation).

Caroline S'Jegers (2007) offers a useful literature review of the healing power of dance in her Dutch B.A. thesis in anthropology, to explore the deeper (underlying) power of dance (S'Jegers, 2007: 34, my translation). She describes concepts such as cathartic value of dance, social control and solidarity, political value, ritual drama and healing aspects of dance in general. Very briefly she compares Dance Therapeutic methods, Authentic Movement and the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup>, and concludes that the word 'healing' is used in different ways, which colour the approach to establish healing in the first place. Emphasising the creative aspects of the individual, these three approaches offer means to gain insight in feelings, including traumatic experience of the past and releasing oneself from the pressure of social expectations (ibid.: 35). The development of identity and acceptance of self are also underlined in each approach. In general, she considers dance as vehicle for emotional and spiritual transformation and self-development, offering an exploration of the personal inner space (ibid.: 39).

Although for some people in some situations there might be negative effects and contra-indications to dancing (Hanna, 1988), dance is generally considered to have a positive effect on wellbeing and personal growth and is understood as a vehicle for self-development and personal integration (Payne, 1992; Penfield, 2001). It is also viewed as a "process which furthers the physical and psychic integration of an individual" (Lewis, 1986). This "integration toward wholeness" may result in change, conflict resolution, realising one's individual potential, an increased capacity to meet one's needs, providing tools for meaningful social

interaction, and bridging the gap between the dancers and their environment (Lewis, 1986). There are various publications on transformative aspects of movement and dance, by other schools that share similarities to the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> and *Movement Medicine* in their emphasis on self-exploration and healing. To mention a few: Authentic Movement (Adler, 2002; Pallaro, 1999), Continuum (Conrad, 2007), Halprin Life/Art Process (Halprin, A. 2002; Halprin, D. 2003) and Body Mind Centering (Cohen, 1993). The knowledge of body, psychology and transformative processes that exists in these fields informs my research as well.

### ***1.3.3 Leadership, Corporate training and Research***

Ali Young is currently working on a PhD thesis at Exeter University, on re-embodied leaderships for contemporary challenges (A. Young, aimed for submission in 2013). Using an eco-feminist analysis, her work explores a number of themes including cultural attitudes towards the environment and the inherently gendered nature of the ways in which ‘leading’ and ‘following’ have been historically constructed by western religious discourse. Her empirical work has been conducted within the *Movement Medicine* community as an example of the kind of progressive spirituality that may open the study of leadership and religion to alternative models and understandings.

Anne Marie Hogya’s M.A. dissertation in Leadership and Training (2004) explores the possibility of bringing *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> to corporate sector organisations, as tool for encouraging and accessing creativity, and effecting and navigating change, both personally and organisationally (Hogya, 2004: 6). She emphasises the “need for innovative ways to learn, make decisions, access information and manage change” as highlighted in the fields of leadership and organisational change (ibid.: 5). To my knowledge, this is the only dissertation that collected data specifically and only from 45 *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> teachers through using on-line questionnaires and telephone interviews, exploring how the practice could be implemented in organisational settings and used on the work floor. Using a qualitative approach based in action-research and appreciative inquiry, she dissects what teachers and organisations would need in order to modify the practice in such way that it

becomes relevant in the workplace, for example with regards to language and teaching style. She also describes possible benefits for organisations such as team building, enhanced creativity, communication skills and facilitation of change processes, stress management and increased employee health and job satisfaction (Hogya, 2004: 90-4).

Jeni Boyd (2007) compares different aspects of doing academic research to the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> practice. She links different research stages to the five different rhythms: planning (Flowing), data collection (Staccato), analysis (Chaos), dissemination of findings (Lyrical) and reflection (Stillness) (2007: 61-2). She also describes elements that the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> enhance or emphasise, which play a role in research as well. This includes for example the relationship between the individual and others, containment, community, dialogue and friction (ibid.: 61). Finally, she makes a case for research including the body and movement as a different way of knowing, which helps her “understand the philosophical underpinnings of [her] research methodology,” “to be fully located in [her] research” and to “live the concepts of transparency and vulnerability” (ibid.: 65). How these themes have come up in my own research is addressed in §1.10.

#### **1.3.4 Mental Health**

Finally, two reports concern the relationship between *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> and mental health in the UK. The first, by Sarah Cook, Karen Ledger and Nadine Scott (2003) aims to explore *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> as alternative to conventional mental health approaches such as psychiatry and medication “to coping and living with mental distress,” and describes the effects and impact of the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> on women’s mental and emotional health (ibid.: 3). The project was funded by the Mental Health Foundation. All three researchers had, at some point, experienced mental health problems themselves. Data was gathered through a combination of anonymous questionnaires, diaries, ‘peer pair interviews’, and focus group interviews. The research participants were asked to comment on the draft report, and their feedback was incorporated. Topics such as a safe space, freedom of expression, the power of music, connections with the group and transformation

were commonly mentioned (ibid.: 11-3). Transformation is further explained as “moving from being stuck,” “releasing powerful feelings,” “integrating parts of ourselves” (ibid.: 14-5). The long-term effects of dancing the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> included physical and emotional wellbeing, and appreciation of music (ibid.: 16-8). It was underlined that the dance was an “enjoyable, energising and enlightening” experience for many women (ibid.: 22). Attention was also paid to what could help people to take part in and improve access to dance activities (ibid.: 18-9, 23).

The second report by Peter Brown (2008), both a mental health care worker and a *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> teacher himself, concerns a pilot project funded by the Arts Council, to bring the practice to four different settings for mental health support. It focussed especially at people who would not come to ordinary dance classes, and the report describes the practical issues that the author encountered, including suggestions for enabling participation of people with mental health issues in other *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> settings. As he did not interview any participants, he could not assess what the ‘individual gains’ were for people participating in his project. However, like Cook, Ledger and Scott (2003), Brown himself also experienced mental health issues before, and had found dancing the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> helpful for his own healing (Brown, 2008: 17).

### **1.3.5 Discussion**

There is considerable overlap in themes that came up in the analyses, between the studies described above and my own results. This includes the importance of aspects such as the body and embodiment; awareness; joyful nature of the dance practice; identity and working with personal patterns; relationships; spirituality and ritual; personal growth, transformation and healing; integration and change; and community. This indicates general currents to which these practices contribute in the eyes of participants and as understood by researchers. As *Movement Medicine* developed for a large part out of the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup>, it is not surprising that many of the themes described with regard to *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup>, also feature in this thesis on *Movement Medicine*.

It is interesting to note that all the authors (except possibly Hogya (2004) who does not mention this) experienced the dance practices as participants themselves. Most of them employed qualitative methodologies, and several stressed ‘phenomenological’ and/or ‘hermeneutical’ approaches. In the process of data gathering, again with the exception of Hogya (2004), most of them focused on the experience of participants regarding the effects of dancing *Movement Medicine* or *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup>.

There are substantial differences however, in the disciplines in which the respective projects were situated, the research questions and specific methodologies. Together with Hafner’s work (2008), my thesis is the only one so strongly influenced by anthropology. Also, my research is based on a much larger body of empirical data than any of the others, collected over a longer period of time, and including triangulation of findings through different sources of data: interviews, newsletter and participant observation. Furthermore, together with Boyd’s article (2007), my research includes a reflection on the methodology and the insider position of the researcher in the field, which received less to no attention from the other authors. Finally, similar to Juhan’s thesis on the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> and the Open Floor process (2003), my work is the first and so far only comprehensive academic study giving a thorough description of the *Movement Medicine* practice, its foundations, philosophy and mechanisms, and its effect on participants. It describes the practice, as well as going beyond description by bringing together topics such as healing, creation of meaning, bodily knowledge and dance as a way of knowing, expansion of consciousness, and community. I hope therefore that this research contributes to an initial understanding of *Movement Medicine* in general, and offers insights on possible transformative aspects of dance and movement with regard to personal growth, harmonious functioning and wellbeing.



## 1.4 Symbolic and Sensory Anthropology

Aside from Anthropology of the Dance, this research is also inspired by the theory of Symbolic or Interpretive anthropology, which provides a framework for inquiring into the depth and complexity of human experiences. Moving away from materialist and objectivist paradigms, symbolic or interpretive anthropology emphasises the individual interpretations of events, which are embodied in symbols and actions (McGee & Warms, 1996: 430; Moore, 1997: 211). Marcus and Fischer (1999 [1986]) discern two levels of interpretive anthropology: “It provides accounts of other worlds from the inside, and reflects about the epistemological groundings of such accounts” (1999 [1986]: 26). These two ‘levels’ seem to me a reflection of the approaches of Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz, who each represent two different trends in symbolic anthropology, and subsequently proposed different methods for the analysis of fieldwork data.

Geertz considered symbols as a “means of transmitting meaning” and he was interested in “how symbols affect the way people think about their world” (McGee & Warms, 1996: 431). The primary focus was on the informants’ perspective, which anthropologists tried to understand by positioning themselves in the same context (McGee & Warms, 1996: 431). Through ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) cultural theory could be formulated from textual units of analysis, revealing “many-layered interpretations of social life, so that a rich and detailed understanding of the several meanings available for particular events is made possible” (Seale, 1999: 94).

Turner on the other hand, originally trained in British structural-functionalism, viewed symbols as “mechanisms for the maintenance of society” (McGee & Warms, 1996: 431). He broke his data down in three different layers of analysis, which are also distinguishable in studies within structural anthropology (see for example Yalman, 1964: 117): the contextual analysis of external form and characteristics of for example rituals, an interpretation of their symbolic structure as perceived by both specialists and laymen, and finally a critical appraisal of the

deeper lying structures, their problems and contradictions, usually by the anthropological observer (Turner, 1996 [1967]: 442).

Because of the physical nature of *Movement Medicine*, the thesis also draws from the field of anthropology of the body and more specifically that of Sensory Anthropology or Anthropology of the Senses. Whereas visual and verbal aspects of culture are and have been stressed in the analysis of culture, the interest for bodily modes of knowing, healing techniques and recognising the body as existential ground for culture and self introduced an embodied research paradigm (Csordas, 1993: 135-6; Hume, 2007: 2). Although physical sensory experience is of course universal, the western five-senses model does not appear relevant everywhere. What is recognised as belonging to the ‘sensory’ domain varies from culture to culture (see for example Grau, 2011). Kathryn Geurts (2002) describes how in West Africa the Anlo-Ewe cultural contexts include something called *seselelame*, translated as “feel-feel-at-flesh-inside” (2002: 178). This concept covers a combination of external stimuli and internal somatic modes such as balance and the feeling in the mouth and is also associated with emotion, temperament and even vocation (ibid.: 180-1). This bears some resemblance to the ‘felt sense’ that *Movement Medicine* participants refer to (Gendlin, 1978; 1996, discussed in §5.2.1). Also, the *role* of different senses and the *meaning* attributed to particular sensory experiences are culturally constituted (Geurts, 2002). Sensory references made by a culture’s ‘natives’ may not mean the same to them as to the researcher, for example the interpretation of the word ‘seeing’ may be metaphorical rather than physical (Howes, 2008: 447). This asks for situating any of these data in their cultural context. Closely related to physical sensations are sentiments, passions and emotions. This is also recognised in sensory anthropology (Csordas, 1993: 136; Geurts, 2002: 181; Goody, 2002: 22-7).

The role of the body in cultural theory was first recognised by Mary Douglas, who saw the body as a “source of symbols for other complex structures” (Douglas, 2003 [1966]: 142). Later, “the central role of the senses as mediators and shapers of social knowledge and values” became recognised (Howes, 2008: 445). The relationship between body and symbolism was then established, although Thomas Csordas observes tension between phenomenological approaches that

focus on experience, the body and embodiment, versus semiotic (and symbolic) approaches that approach culture through units of textual analysis (1993: 136).<sup>18</sup> This tension is clearly noticeable in my research as well. Kristy Nabhan-Warren (2011) has an interesting way of bridging this tension, by considering bodies as texts and also as vehicles that can transcend the insider-outsider dichotomy. Even though I do not think of my own body as a ‘text’, I subscribe to her approach both through my emphasis on texts as the units of analysis, and by recognising my own body as an “epistemological site of knowing” (Nabhan-Warren, 2011: 384). This will be further addressed in §1.10. Also, her emphasis on the relational exchange between self and other, insider and outsider are also addressed through the multimodal framework that I will introduce below. Other authors also include and appreciate their physical experiences as part of their investigations. Kathryn Geurts (2002) for example describes an event of driving over a stone on a compound during her fieldwork, which she experienced as a jolt of lightning shooting through her body. She initially tried to ignore and dismiss these feelings but instead, through discussing the event with some of the Anlo-Ewe people, came to see it as a crucial moment in understanding their ways of receiving and interpreting knowledge. In other words, in the fashion of the people she studied, she started to consider her own bodily feelings as a possible source of information (Geurts, 2002). This field of inquiry is especially relevant to studies of dance and movement. Caroline Potter (2008) took this a few steps further by enrolling in professional dance training herself, to study the “multiple sensory modes that inform the process of becoming a dancer” (2008: 445). Through her embodied experience as a professional dance student she was subject to similar sensory experiences as the other students. She was not just hearing about bodily knowledge, but actually experiencing with and through her own moving body the sensory experiences related to the process of becoming a contemporary dancer, and was therefore able to elaborate specifically on the senses of touch and sound, and also to include more unusual senses of heat, pain and kinaesthesia, the role of

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<sup>18</sup> Howes even sees the linguistic turn in anthropology in the 1970s and 80s as hindrance in the development of a sensory anthropology (2008: 445).

gravity and the importance of ‘alignment’ within the dancer’s body (Potter, 2008: 446, 450).<sup>19</sup>

To unravel the intention and meaning of culture, anthropology draws on both ethnographic and hermeneutic methodologies (Geertz, 1973: 452). Both methodologies are apparent in my research, and this combination has been used by other dance researchers as well (Hanstein, 1999; McNamara, 1999). I used the ethnographic tools such as participant observation and qualitative interviewing to gather data, while hermeneutics informed the entire process including the analysis. I will highlight some of my understanding of hermeneutics before I turn to the practical application of both these methodologies in the context of my research later in this chapter.

## 1.5 Triple Hermeneutics

*Hermeneutics*, the art of the interpretation of texts that originated in the exegesis of the protestant bible, considers the development of ideas and reflection on the data a constant and flexible process throughout the research. This is expressed in the concept of the ‘hermeneutic circle’, emphasising that “the meaning of a part can only be understood if it is related to the whole” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000: 53). There are several varieties of hermeneutics, but generally they represent the continuous exchange between whole and part, between pre-understanding and understanding, and between the polarity of subject-object. In their book *Reflexive Methodology* (2000), business administration and management studies scholars Mats Alvesson and Kaj Sköldberg describe an approach called ‘triple hermeneutics’ (2000: 144). Like the aforementioned approaches to studying symbols and ritual, this includes multiple levels of interpretation, to do justice to the complexity of issues around interpretation and, as such, answers to Marcus and Fischer’s description of symbolic anthropology; the call for reflections “about epistemological groundings of insider accounts” (1999 [1986]: 26).

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<sup>19</sup> The issue of gender is discussed in §3.2.7.

First of all, ‘simple hermeneutics’ “concerns individuals’ interpretations of themselves and their own subjective or intersubjective (cultural) reality, and the meaning they assign to this” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000: 144). In this light I would like to introduce the term ‘anthropology of experience’ coined by Victor Turner. This was inspired by Wilhelm Dilthey’s hermeneutical concept ‘Erlebnis’ or “what has been ‘lived through’” and chosen instead of terms such as hermeneutic, symbolic or interpretive anthropology, to emphasise practical experience and performance (Bruner, 1986: 3-4). ‘Experience’ refers to “how events are received by consciousness,” and includes, besides sensory data and cognition also feelings, expectations, impressions and images (Bruner, 1986: 4-5).<sup>20</sup> This seems very closely related to Geertz’ notion of “how symbols affect the way people think about their world” (McGee & Warms, 1996: 431), but will also become relevant again with regard to the third layer of ‘triple hermeneutics’. Compared to the more structuralist approach to the study of symbols and ritual action as discussed above, ‘simple hermeneutics’ seems to join the level of contextual form and characteristics with the specialists and laymen’s interpretations, respectively the first and second levels of analysis of symbolic structures in rituals.

‘Double hermeneutics’ “is what interpretive social scientists are engaged in, when they attempt to understand and develop knowledge about this reality. Social science is thus a matter of interpreting interpretive beings” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000: 144). This includes Geertz’ notion of culture as “an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong” (Geertz, 1973: 452) and the assumption of writing a story about other people’s stories (Bruner, 1986: 10). It also shows similarities to the hermeneutics of ‘faith’ or ‘restoration’, which tries to “unearth and highlight meanings that are present” (Josselson, 2004: 4, based on Ricoeur

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<sup>20</sup> Anthropology has of course always been concerned with people’s experiences, but Bruner observed that the process of interpreting data tends “to filter out experience” after which it is reintroduced “to make our ethnographies more real, more alive” (Bruner, 1986: 9). The difference therefore, as I understand it, lies in leaving “the definition of the unit of investigation up to the informants, rather than imposing categories derived from our own ever-shifting theoretical frames. Expressions are the peoples’ articulations, formulations, and representations of their own experience” (Bruner, 1986: 9).

1970, 1981). “The aim of the hermeneutics of faith is to re-present, explore and/or understand the subjective world of the participants and/or the social and historical world they feel themselves to be living in” (Josselson, 2004: 5) and the informant is considered “the expert on his or her own experience and is able and willing to share meanings with the researcher” (Josselson, 2004: 5). Again, if we compare it to Turner’s method of interpreting ritual symbols, this would be similar to the third level of ritual analysis.

‘Triple hermeneutics’ finally, includes a third element, which is “the critical interpretation of unconscious processes, ideologies, power relations, and other expressions of dominance that entail the privileging of certain interests over others, within the forms of understanding which appear to be spontaneously generated” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000: 144). This includes Bourdieu’s ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ or ‘demystification’ as Josselson prefers to call it, (2004: 15, based on Ricoeur 1970, 1981), and also what Alvesson and Sköldberg call ‘alethic hermeneutics’ (2000: 56-8). Accounts of experience are not seen as transparent and straightforward, but rather always include the unsaid, the denied, and that which is “too dangerous to know or to speak” about (Josselson, 2004: 14). This leads not to a re-presentation but offers a different reading of what the participant has related (ibid.: 16). This can also be compared to the difference between tacit and explicit culture (see for example: Spradley & McCurdy, 2009).

That these unconscious processes do not only appear in the culture of study and its informants, but also in the researcher and in the research process, is becoming more and more accepted. In this light I would like to introduce the work of clinical psychologist Robert Romanyshyn (2007), who developed a methodology of ‘alchemical hermeneutics’ which he sees as the “offspring of the encounter between the tradition of hermeneutics and depth psychology” (Romanyshyn, 2007: 235). It is, in my words, about becoming aware of a *third* partner in the hermeneutical cycle besides the subject-object relation, namely the unconscious aspects of the researcher, the research project and the relation between those two. This leads to a deepening of the traditional ‘hermeneutic circle’ by transforming it into a spiral (Romanyshyn, 2007: 222), so attempting to make the unconscious conscious. Romanyshyn’s approach is an attempt to bridge the gap

between the fullness of experiences and the difficulty to communicate that, and in the process to learn more about what we do not know. This is done not with the intention to make hermeneutics more valid philosophically, but to include psychological awareness in this research methodology (Romanyshyn, 2007: 222). I investigated my underlying personal motivations for doing this research, as well as contemplating the question why the research had come to me, what it ‘wanted’ of me (see Appendix K). During the research period I recorded dreams that were relevant to the research, and I literally ‘danced’ with the research as dance partner for insights and inspiration, inviting it to tell its tale. I wanted to interact with the ‘soul’ of the research that in turn equally expressed a desire to interact with the world.

I very much *feel* the ‘stream of experience’ as metaphor for life in general and *Movement Medicine* in particular, because it represents the ever changing and flowing nature of life from birth to death. This flow can at times be like a wide calm Dutch river passing open, still lakes (which I feel strongly in my hips and legs), but also like a quicksilver mountain stream with rocks and rapids (which I feel more in my torso, arms, shoulders and head). The currents bring me in touch with others and introduce new experiences to me. Different streams meet and merge, always flowing onward, until they ultimately dissolve in the vast expansion of the Oceans that connect all life on earth. Yes, I *feel* this. However, this felt understanding is placed in a solid theoretical framework. Besides using the discourses from dance anthropology, symbolic and sensory anthropology and hermeneutics, the multimodal framework allows room for these experiential, sensual, relational, emotional, rational and spiritual flavours of the human experience, both in the researcher and the investigated culture.

## **1.6 The Multimodal Framework (MMF)**

Streams and currents are also very much present in the multimodal framework (MMF), as analogy for structures of meaning within a given culture and within individual lives. Observing that cultural theories often either focus on the

individual actors ('individualist' interpretations) or on structural social group variables ('holist' interpretations) Geoffrey Samuel proposed a re-conceptualisation of the field of interpretive anthropology to include and transcend this dichotomy (Samuel, 1990: 12). The multimodal framework (MMF) aims to deliberately dissolve these and other polarities,<sup>21</sup> and to incorporate multiple ways of knowing including concepts not particularly close to western experience (Samuel, 1990: 3-4). Where Geertz' image of man "suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun" (Geertz, 1973: 5) is characteristic for interpretive anthropological approaches, Samuel observed that this image is "neither purely individual (once spun, they take on a life of their own) nor are they purely social (they have spinners)" (Samuel, 1990: 11). Those (two-dimensional) webs exist in a conceptual space which can for example be represented by a third dimension of 'time' (ibid.: 11-2). As a metaphor for the MMF, Samuel described "structures of meaning and feeling in which and through which we live as patterns formed by the currents in the course of a vast stream or river. The direction of the stream is the flow of time" (ibid.: 11). As such, the MMF includes the Geertzian image of 'webs' as currents or vortices within the stream, without needing to take a stance in favour of either individual or social explanations of culture (ibid.: 11, 12). The stream consists of different currents. As I understand it, we can distinguish currents from general to specific that, according to their 'density' and 'intensity', mutually influence each other (ibid.: 13).

First of all, there are semi-permanent 'modal states' (MSm) or 'modal currents' (Samuel, 1990: 68) of which a society or 'manifold' consists. This includes a specific combination of particular values in any given place and time such as the general type of governance, kinship systems and the use of technology within a culture (ibid.: 13). In the analogy with the flow of the stream, we could perhaps call this the mainstream culture. This is construed of further cultural modal states (MSc's) that correspond to phenomena such as different political parties, classes, art genres and religious streams within the larger culture. These MSc's "grow and fade in importance [and] new ones are introduced" (ibid.: 13, see also

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<sup>21</sup> These include for example the dichotomies of subject-object, mind-body, and self-other.



71). The New Age Movement can be considered as one of the MSc's of the general western social manifold (MSm).

We can furthermore distinguish “modal states of the individual” (MSi). These have a cognitive function, are associated with images and symbols, “moods, motivations, feelings and emotions,” decision structures, a particular sense of self and relationship to others and the world around, correspond to physiological aspects and have a flexibility in their connection to other states (ibid.: 15-6, see also 72). The MSi's are derived from and influenced by both MSm and MSc (which in turn are to a lesser extent influenced by the countless MSi's) (ibid.: 13).

Each individual has a ‘repertoire’ or ‘vocabulary’ of several of those ‘individual modal states’ (Samuel, 1990: 14). These are partly defined by the MSc's an individual grows up in and/or is drawn to, but also by his or her personal interpretation and translation of these particular MSc's. The New Age (MSc) current for example takes different shapes for all the individuals that consider themselves part of this movement. The structure of the ‘manifold’ presents an individual with certain ‘individual modal states’, and assumes a specific response pattern from them. At the same time, the individual can switch between the different states according to what a specific situation requires and is also able to introduce new states or patterns (ibid.: 14).

The MMF offers both structure and freedom (Samuel, 1990: 37), not unlike the *Movement Medicine* practice itself. It furthermore addresses the balance between individual and society, neither moving away from nor imposing a sense of cultural unity (ibid.: 38). The emphasis on relatedness and interconnection is also important in both the MMF and *Movement Medicine* (ibid.: 12, 40), and finally the framework helps to understand the incorporation of shamanism so fundamental to *Movement Medicine*.

## 1.7 Culture and the Field

Culture, as we have seen above, has been defined in terms of systems of beliefs of individual or group, with images of webs and streams, and in the case of the MMF

is “constituted by the ebb and flow of these currents” (Samuel, 1990: 68). Cultures, and hence research fields, often used to be defined by a geographical situation such as a village, an area or a country. Under influence of virtual and global developments however, both cultures and research fields have become less easy to define. As Coleman and Collins observe, place is not necessarily the container of a culture or a movement (2006: 2). Although the ‘School of Movement Medicine’ is based in Devon, *Movement Medicine* as an activity is taught and practiced in dance studios, village halls, gyms and theatres throughout Europe and recently in South Africa as well. People from many different nationalities attend workshops, forming both ‘instant’ communities for the duration of a workshop, and an ongoing community of *Movement Medicine* over time. As an activity, it is therefore neither confined to a geographical location nor defined by a fixed group of people (compare Gore, 1999: 211). This is enhanced in virtual reality through the ‘School of Movement Medicine’ website, its monthly newsletter, email communication with teachers and peers, and finally ‘Facebook’ and ‘Ning’ group websites. This fits well with the definition of culture as ‘manifold’, or an assemblage of initially unstructured points, without initial assumptions of how these may be related (Samuel, 1990: 9), and needs to be discovered through observations, and slowly formulating relationships between the different elements.

Research fields as conceptual rather than empirical spaces (Gore, 1999: 210) are “constructed through a play of social relationships established between ethnographers and informants that may extend across physical sites, comprehending embodied as well as visual and verbal interactions” (Coleman & Collins, 2006: 12). Furthermore, both “the site and its boundaries may actually be determined *post hoc* through processes of analysis and writing” (ibid.: 6, italics in original). More than a relatively static image of research in which the anthropologist tries to access and reflect on an existing culture from an actor’s perspective as best as possible (McGee & Warms, 1996: 431), I therefore consider the research including fieldwork *and* representation as a social event, continuing still after the ink of the thesis has dried. This is further amplified because of my personal role as practitioner and apprentice of *Movement Medicine* that preceded the research and is likely to continue afterwards.

### ***1.7.1. Anthropology at Home and the Researcher as Insider***

Although anthropology has traditionally been associated largely with distant and remote research areas, since the 1970s anthropologists started to study their own culture (Jackson, 1987; Peirano, 1998: 107). As this research project took place in a relatively familiar western culture, and within the community of my own dance practice, I conducted ‘anthropology at home’. For various reasons however, I was also very much *not* at home. The UK is not my country of birth, and living there since 2006, a year and half prior to the start of my research, thoroughly impacted my sense of identity and social role. This created more of a culture shock than I anticipated and only now, after nearly seven years, the exoticness of living abroad is becoming more every day. Furthermore, as *Movement Medicine* is practiced in a variety of locations, most times I travelled away from home to attend any workshop with the exception of three or four workshops where I could stay at home and travel to the venue daily from my house (see also Kraft Alsop, 2002).

Participant observation, which was originally introduced as a method to improve observation, encourages participation in both action and behaviour (Fabian, 1983: 95). However, taking seriously a peoples’ ‘spiritual’ realities and practices, continues to raise questions about validity and reliability of that specific research, and ‘going native’ in that area has only become accepted to a certain degree (James Clifford, 1988; James Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Marcus & Fischer, 1999 [1986]; Wallis, 2003: 4). My position as student of *Movement Medicine* in the first group of Apprentices and Teacher Trainees (2009-2011) raises several methodological issues. Much has been written about the advantages and disadvantages of the ‘insiders’ or ‘emic’ point of view and ‘going native’. On the one hand this is dismissed on the basis of an ideal of scientific objectivity, while on the other hand it is seen as the only way in which meaning can be understood (Moore, 1997: 212). The two domains of scientific (objective) observations and personal (subjective) experience are often seen as incompatible, and it is considered unprofessional to mix the two (Tedlock, 1991: 71), considering self-reflection and ‘auto-research’ as a danger for the distance necessary to question underlying currents in the research culture (Grau, 1999). Nevertheless, more and

more researchers not only conduct a study in their own culture or society, but in religious movements or ‘experiential ‘spiritualities’ that they are interested in, or even (become) part of, prior to or during the research (Greenwood, 2000; Luhmann, 1989; Orion, 1995; Wallis, 2003; A. Young, 2011).<sup>22</sup> However, questions such as what it is “that an insider is insider of?” (Merriam et al., 2001: 411), and also to what degree someone is an insider, are not straightforward to answer.

First of all, the distinction between insider and outsider is less clear than it seems, and both can be considered as “relative positions that are moved into and out of” (De Andrade, 2000: 287). Neither of these should be considered as fixed or static, as they are always influenced by for example the situation, the cultural members that are present and their specific roles, and also by the passing of time during the research (compare Chavez, 2008: 476). In a way, all of us (whether researcher or not) are simultaneously both insiders and outsiders (Banks, 1998: 7). Chavez even calls the distinction between insider and outsider “a false dichotomy,” as similar methodological issues come up for both outsider and insider researchers (Chavez, 2008: 474). These issues include the boundaries between self and other, shifting and managing different identities of the researcher during the research, his or her sense of self and positionality, situated knowledge and knowledge construction according to the researcher’s position, power and representation (Chavez, 2008; De Andrade, 2000; Hurd & McIntyre, 1996; Merriam et al., 2001). It seems that “clear-cut distinctions between emic/insider and etic/outsider cannot be maintained as the ethnographer is more of a shapeshifter, one who takes on multiple forms in the field” (Nabhan-Warren, 2011: 384). These multiple forms, or roles, will be discussed below.

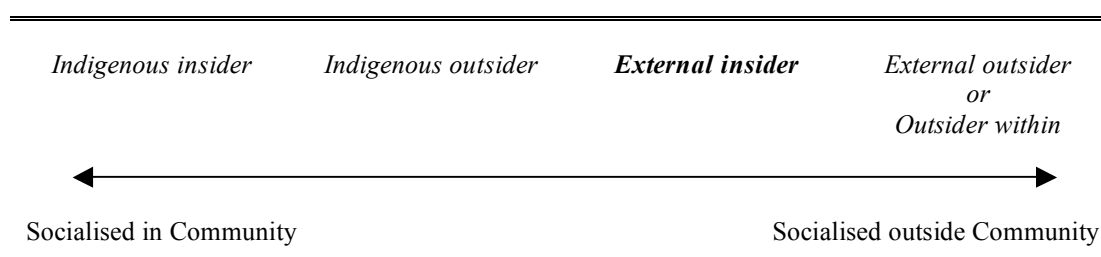
Secondly, not only the differences between insider and outsider positions are part of the methodological debate, but also variations between different degrees of being an insider researcher, a position that is not considered fixed or one-

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<sup>22</sup> Johannes Fabian describes how, when encountering other cultures, “intellectual and existential problems” can be overcome by stepping or placing oneself outside of “rationalized frames of exploration” (2000: 8). He calls this ‘ecstatic anthropology’, and sees this as “prerequisite for, rather than an impediment to, the production of ethnographic knowledge” (ibid.).

dimensional either (De Andrade, 2000: 286). Chavez poses that “no single articulation exists that describes what configuration or degree of social experience warrants the designation of insider” (Chavez, 2008: 475). Positionality, according to Merriam et al. (2001), is “determined by where one stands in relation to ‘the other’,” by given social and cultural characteristics, and therefore, a researcher can be *relatively* more inside or outside (2001: 411, my emphasis).

Different models are used to clarify these distinctions. James Banks (1998) for example, proposed a classification for cross cultural researchers (whether from different ethnic backgrounds, genders, social class or religion) with a continuum between two extremes describing the position of the researcher to the community under study. The ‘closest’ a researcher can get to the community, is as a ‘indigenous insider’ who was raised in the culture and who is still considered as a legitimate community member. Passing through the positions of ‘indigenous outsider’ and ‘external insider’, on the other end of the scale is the ‘external outsider’ who was socialised in a different community entirely, leading to only partial understanding of values, perspectives and cultural knowledge (Banks, 1998: 8, see also Chavez, 2008: 475). This position of the ‘external outsider’ could also be called the ‘outsider-within’ (Collins, 1986). In a diagram, this typology looks like this:



*Table 2: Degree of Insiderness, adapted from Banks (1998) and Chavez (2008), including Collins (1986)*

As I, nor anyone, were ‘raised’ in the *Movement Medicine* community, my position could be described as that of an ‘external insider’ (bold in the diagram above), who was socialised outside of the community of study, but who has internalised and acts

according to “beliefs and knowledge claims of his or her second or ‘adopted’ community,” possibly (but not necessarily) rejecting elements of the primary community in which he or she was raised (Banks, 1998: 8). Although this classification is useful to shed light on the variety of positions of being an insider researcher, it does not really apply to my research because the term ‘community’ is much more flexible with regards to *Movement Medicine* than to communities in which aspects such as family ties, ethnicity and ongoing association determine the membership. With regard to *Movement Medicine*, we could say that one is a member of the community if one decides to be, regardless of class, status, age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity or even frequency of attendance. Naturally, the more one participates and is ‘exposed’ to the perspectives, customs, behaviours and unwritten rules, the more informed one becomes. I studied intensively with the Darling Khans since slightly before the start of the ‘School of Movement Medicine’ in 2007, and can therefore be considered an insider. However, some of the interviewees have trained with them for (more than) twenty years, or have a much closer working relationship with them than I ever had.

More useful therefore is Chavez’ model (2008), which distinguishes between ‘total insiders’ and ‘partial insiders’. A total insider researcher shares ‘multiple identities’ or ‘profound experiences’, whereas a partial insider researcher shares a single or a few identities, “with a degree of distance or detachment from the community” (Chavez, 2008: 475). In this classification I would count as a ‘total insider’, as many of my identities (or ‘roles’ as I prefer to call them) are similar to those of the research participants (white, middle class, well educated, interested in issues such as social justice, sustainability, personal growth and spirituality) and I also share profound experiences with many of them, having participated in many intensive workshops and various rituals such as sweat lodges, long dances, a fire walk and burial ceremonies.

### ***1.7.2. Advantages and Challenges of the Insider Position***

Being an insider researcher of any degree brings advantages as well as challenges, although certain aspects may be perceived as an advantage for one researcher, and as a disadvantage for another (Chavez, 2008: 479-80). “What an insiders ‘sees’ and ‘understands’ will be different from, but as valid as what an outsider understands,” and both are legitimate (Merriam et al., 2001: 415). Through my personal involvement, I experienced the multi-faceted nature of the practice and the impact and possibilities for profound change that participants would describe. I consider my perspective as practitioner therefore not only as added value to the research (Sullivan, 2006), but as absolute necessity for the intellectual argument, as some aspects could not have been investigated by an outsider (Greenwood, 2000: 13). Other advantages included easy access to ‘the field’, a natural interaction between the informants and myself, access to a diversity of data sources and levels of insight, the ability to ask meaningful questions, understanding precepts of participants, their non-verbal responses, and practical happenings in general (P. A. Adler & Adler, 1997: 26-8; Chavez, 2008: 480-1; Merriam et al., 2001: 411). As I was “already situated within a network of social relations” (Gore, 1999: 214), the shared practice seemed to open doors, even for setting up interviews with people I had not met before. Finally, the fact that my research and personal interests were combined, such as my love for dance and explorations of embodied spirituality, was also an advantage (Anderson, 2006: 389). Like Robin Sylvan, who conducted a study on Rave from an insiders’ perspective, I trust that being transparent in my approach will satisfy the requirement for academic rigour (Sylvan, 2005: 52).

However, like any methodological approach, an insider position also has its disadvantages (Anderson, 2006: 390). The main complications include a possibly biased (usually overly positive) position towards the culture and its mechanisms, a need for multi-tasking and performing several roles simultaneously, a possible lack of curiosity, and blindness to the obvious (Anderson, 2006: 390; Chavez, 2008: 474-5; Merriam et al., 2001: 411). This would limit the researcher’s ability to observe, ask meaningful questions, and interpret the data. In this way, the similarities between researcher and researched may create a certain naïveté,

through which experiences of participants remain critically unexamined (Hurd & McIntyre, 1996: 88). Especially in the case of researchers studying a religious movement, it is important to keep distance from “the movement’s representation of itself,” as these representations are well upheld by its leaders and participants (Prince & Riches, 2000: 3). Although the self-images need to be ‘unpacked’ as part of the movement, “the challenge must be to elucidate the deeper social currents which bring the movement, in its entirety (including its self-images), into being” (ibid.).<sup>23</sup> This complication of the insider position is also mentioned by Chavez (2008: 479), and indeed proved a challenge. For example, being a *Movement Medicine* practitioner changed the language I used in my daily life and, had my supervisors not been so observant, also in my research (compare Prince & Riches, 2000: xii). Initially I took for granted the metaphorical description of experiences and parts of the practice (see §3.1.9), but also reprogrammed myself to choose the word ‘and’ rather than ‘but’ in any sentence, which is emphasised in *Movement Medicine* to enhance a feeling of inclusion rather than exclusion or objection. Furthermore, I adopted a general framing of experiences in a positive light including gratitude, a “can do attitude,” and a “one step at the time, setting yourself up for success” policy, and did regard the people on the ongoing training as ‘family’. However, during the last half year of my writing, I felt myself distancing from what I came to perceive as prescribed, normative behaviour that I did not feel comfortable with, such as the use of specific phrases, jokes, songs and social behaviour either in the centre or in the margins of the *Movement Medicine* practice. That this coincided with the end of my ‘Teacher Training’ is interesting, as it may have also been part of the letting go of transference roles towards my teachers and the body of work that I had ‘steeped’ in for so long. At this time, my researcher’s role came “to supersede [my] former role as native” (Prince & Riches, 2000: x). I only became aware of the “fragility and complexity of [my] unique positionality” (Chavez, 2008: 490) in the final stages of the research, especially when dealing

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<sup>23</sup> One of the New Age representations for example displays a “dissatisfaction with mainstream values and practices,” followers implying that “the movement with which they now identify offers something profound which the mainstream failed to provide” (Prince & Riches, 2000: 3).



with criticism from research participants towards the practice and in one case towards the research.

Adler & Adler consider it unlikely that the membership role is “to be meaningfully transformed by the research addition” (P. A. Adler & Adler, 1997: 33), as this precedes the research role. I think however, that my understanding of *Movement Medicine* certainly deepened through the research reflections. Like other participants I would go home after a workshop, try to integrate the insights I had gained during a workshop into my daily life, but possibly unlike others, I was also intensely theoretically engaged with its concepts, symbols and practices. Towards the end of my PhD, this became so intense that I noticed a need for distance from the practice, more than would have likely been the case had my ‘exposure’ been slower or less intense.

The danger of the insider researcher having power over the participants as raised by Merriam et al. (2001: 413), which Adler and Adler call ‘role betrayals’ (1997: 32, 36), is inevitably true for outsider researchers as well. However, due to familiarity and positionality, the similarity between insider researcher and researched may obscure any existing power dynamics, and a closer look is therefore necessary. Does the insider researcher negotiate all the power in the research? Regarding informed consent, I have always explained in great detail the approach of the research to people I interviewed. Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan gave me permission to be in this dual role of participant and researcher during workshops, therefore I did not arrange additional informed consent from individual workshop participants. It may seem as if I slipped into a role of “differential social power between researchers and their subjects” (P. A. Adler & Adler, 1997: 37), which has been one of the criticisms against ethnography in general. However, differences in age, status, education, financial resources, potential influence or direct authority that may have influenced this research or my contact with other practitioners (P. A. Adler & Adler, 1997: 38), do not really seem significant in the *Movement Medicine* culture, as the practice aims for a non-hierarchical culture. Although it is recognised that, as teachers, Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan have a different role and therefore a different responsibility, they nevertheless are very approachable to all participants.

Therefore, I do not think that I had more access to them outside of workshops because of the research, than other participants. We did, however, agree on a financial deal,<sup>24</sup> which allowed me to do sufficient workshops for participant observation in the first phase of the research. However, again, I do not think this put me in an exceptional place, as I met many people who did equal numbers of workshops or even more with enough financial resources to support that. Also, the ‘School of Movement Medicine’ operates a system of bursaries and discounts for many participants.

My dual role sometimes created ‘role confusion’ (P. A. Adler & Adler, 1997: 32). In one case, my empathy as researcher was confused with friendship. At the start of the ‘Apprenticeship Programme’, people needed clarity about the confidentiality agreed between the apprentices regardless of the research, especially that I was not gathering data during those training modules. Finally, when three informants (partially) withdrew their cooperation to the research because they did not feel free to express criticism and were afraid of repercussions from the teachers, I experienced anxiety about my role as researcher. I feared that voicing criticism in the thesis would damage my relationship to Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan and my role as practitioner of *Movement Medicine*. In a conversation with Susannah Darling Khan (16.09.09), I emphasised that as anthropologist I would honour and respect the sensitivity of the School, the teachers and participants (A.A.A. Code of Ethics, 1998; A.S.A. Ethical Guidelines, 1999), while she reassured me that I would not personally be held accountable for the criticism of others. We acknowledged that there was a vulnerability in the timing of this research, being carried out at such an early stage of the ‘School of Movement Medicine’.

From the eighteen specific complications to the insider status that Chavez (2008) describes, I recognise three that played a role in my situation: “difficulty with recognizing patterns due to familiarity with community,” which I have addressed above, “the rise of value conflicts as a result of research and community member role” and “large amounts of impression management” (Chavez, 2008:

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<sup>24</sup> Weekend workshops for free, 50% discount on intensives up until but excluding the ‘Apprenticeship Programme’ and ‘Teacher Training’.

479). Neither of these was insurmountable. The others have, to my knowledge, not played any role at all. This may be due to the nature of the *Movement Medicine* community, which is flexible, open, diverse, and in which self-reflectivity is encouraged in participants. Asking questions as a researcher only underlined that, but did not create a new situation. Therefore, no conflict arose between the ‘academic’ interview format and the “community conversational style” (Chavez, 2008: 489). Finally, vulnerability regarding the disclosure of personal information (De Andrade, 2000: 284-5), both in the community as well as professionally, was one of the reasons not to continue the experiment with autoethnography, as discussed in §1.10.1.

My outlook, perspectives and probably the way I was perceived by others, were strongly affected by my insiders’ position. That I was a complete member meant that I was first and foremost seen as a *Movement Medicine* participant, while “the research role flowed out of it” (P. A. Adler & Adler, 1997: 33). I cannot say for sure how the research, or my insider position as trainee affected the participants. It seems however, that if there were any effects, those were beneficial. The responses I received were supportive and encouraging, often expressing gratitude or excitement for either “information about *Movement Medicine* going out to as many people as possible” or to get an academic reflection on it, which would help people with funding applications for different projects. All interviewees and a great number of other dancers as well, were interested in receiving email updates of my research findings and progress. During workshops many asked how the research was coming along, and this often led to interesting discussions and exchange of ideas, which informed my understanding of *Movement Medicine* further.

Finally, the issues of representation of the research findings as raised by Merriam et al. (2001: 414), and the exchange of information possibly being seen as manipulative (P. A. Adler & Adler, 1997: 32, 36) are again similar for insider as well as outsider researchers. Representing a variety of voices in an empowering way, and for different voices and discordant meanings to be included is addressed separately in §1.5, §1.9 and §1.10.

In the section on participant observation below, I will comment in more detail on my dual role as practitioner and researcher of *Movement Medicine*. The non-dichotomising strategies in the MMF also apply to the act of conducting research. Although the quotation below refers explicitly to the study of rituals, which need to include different, inseparable, levels of understanding, “one cannot separate a particular orientation towards the social group from a specific perception of the nature of ‘reality’ and especially from a specific construction of the sense of self” (Samuel, 1990: 97). All these are naturally part of one single whole. I therefore understand that ‘going native’ within the MMF means stepping into and being carried by the particular current of the culture under study, engaging with and in the “possible modes of thinking within a society” (ibid.), without going into any dichotomy of for example self-other, or researcher-native: “Seeing and feeling the world through that modal state, the barrier between individual and society, self and other does not exist. The individual, the self, is part of the larger social group” (ibid.).

## **1.8 From theory to practice: the research tools**

### ***1.8.1 Participant Observation***

Participant observation, as one of the distinguishing methods in anthropology (Bruner, 1986: 3), allowed me to gain experiential knowledge in the process of understanding, to do unobtrusive observation without people feeling they were ‘watched’, and discovering, through my personal process, aspects that the informants might not have been aware of themselves or were reluctant to share (Patton, 1990 in Moustakas, 1994: 3-4). Because of my personal involvement, I was in some ways more of an observing participant than a participant observer. At the time of completing this thesis, I had participated in a total number of 180 full days of *Movement Medicine*, distributed over three weekend workshops and 27 intensive workshops ranging from five to ten days between September 2006 and December 2011 (see Appendix B). During the course of this research, the nature of

the participant observation changed. During the first phase up until June 2009, it took its most active form, in which I wrote field notes of setting, process, observations, experiences and anything else that seemed important during each workshop. When I became part of the ‘Apprenticeship Programme’, which later continued in the ‘Teacher Training’, it felt inappropriate to include these workshops in the research for various reasons. Firstly, these programmes were offered for the first time and therefore covered rather unexplored terrain. Secondly, they were to some extent ‘tailor made’, with participants individually designing their own aims and objectives, which resulted in 49 ‘different’ apprenticeships, equal to the original number of apprentices. And thirdly, for reasons of confidentiality, these training modules had a different character to other ongoing groups because of the nature of the explorations. Therefore, from that moment onwards the focus shifted to *participation* during six specific training modules, and to *assisting* Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan in a further twelve workshops (again, see Appendix B for a concise overview). During this second phase I continued to keep notes of my personal practice, which still continued to inform the thesis. The assisting also continued to deepen my understanding of *Movement Medicine*.

Despite my dual role as researcher and participant, writing basic field notes did not stand out as unusual, as all participants of intensive workshops are requested to bring a notebook for certain exercises and reflections, and write in it regularly both during sessions and breaks. Mostly however, my writing during sessions consisted of personal experiences, while I saved observations about group size, processes and exercises for afterwards. I therefore believe that I was largely able to maintain an ordinary participant-role, without creating a different atmosphere or setting because of the research. The disadvantage of this was that I had very limited time to relax or socialise during workshops, as my breaks were often filled with catching up on research writing, especially in the early days of the research of very extensive note taking. However, I did feel that the intensive writing contributed to my integration and understanding of the work, and often that I needed time alone in silence anyway, rather than engaging with others. This need for solitude did also not stand out as unusual, as there are usually several people

sitting alone. I asked permission from the teachers beforehand, and left it up to them whether they wanted to announce it in the group. The teachers did not always mention the research, so it is possible that some participants were not aware of my role as researcher. However, it did not happen secretly. Also, when people on a certain course were interviewed, they often spoke about it with others, so again, it did not go unnoticed.

There were only a few occasions on which I needed to switch between different roles or responsibilities quite rapidly (P. A. Adler & Adler, 1997: 33). From being a participant amongst other participants, including having my own personal dance experience (and the emotional process that it often creates), being a fellow dancer or friend to other participants, being a participant in relation to the teacher(s), to being a researcher, observer or interviewer, all in one afternoon. Usually however, I felt able to integrate these many roles quite well. This may have been partly because different roles and responsibilities of people (including those of the teachers) are naturally acknowledged in *Movement Medicine* in general. Research specific, they were also clarified during conversations with for example Susannah Darling Khan, where we would consciously change roles during a meeting, voicing that we were switching from teacher-participant to informant-researcher interaction.

As there are no other shared (regular) communal activities that *Movement Medicine* participants attend together, the participant observation remained limited to workshop situations only. Due to respect for the privacy of the personal environment of research participants, but also due to financial and time constraints, I chose not to follow up on people's observations during interviews in their daily lives. Therefore, I have no data on experiencing the participants outside workshop situations.

### **1.8.2 Interviews**

Qualitative interviews were another important source of data. An invitation in the electronic newsletter of the 'School of Movement Medicine' (see Appendix C) created an enormous response; within a few days I received 32 replies. People also approached me in workshops. Again, because of financial and time resources not all

responses eventually led to an interview. I sent out background information on the research to anyone interested (see Appendix D) and usually arrangements would then be made for an interview at a later date and time. The process of selecting was governed by spontaneity and availability. I would check if there was a chance of both of us being on an upcoming workshop together. If that would be the case we would create time for an interview then. Otherwise we would arrange for a telephone interview. That some were not followed through was basically due to limited time resources on either end.

I interviewed 25 people, eighteen women and seven men in total, including Susannah and Ya'Acov Darling Khan. The interviews were conducted face to face (19), by telephone (3), and through a written format (3).<sup>25</sup> The interviews usually lasted between an hour and an hour and a half, the shortest and longest being 21 and 130 minutes respectively. All informants had been in higher education, and worked as retail buyers, artists, midwives, architects, managers, consultants, body workers, therapists, artisans, journalists and academics, often self-employed. Their age ranged from 25 to 61 years old. Nationalities included English (14), Dutch (5), German, Spanish, Italian, Slovene, Bulgarian and Swedish (one each). The interviewees were all seasoned dancers, and most had danced with Ya'Acov and Susannah Darling Khan for a number of years (three being the shortest). The motivations to participate in the research ranged from appreciating a space to articulate and share their personal dance experience, hoping to find a new understanding of the dance through a possibly different (intellectual) frame of reference, sharing with a wider audience their passion for dance as a tool for healing, development, expanding consciousness, to hoping to contribute in this way to a "positive change of individuals and society." With three of the 25 interviewees I had a second follow-up interview as a few topics had not been addressed in the first interview. With Susannah Darling Khan I had four meetings in total with a combined purpose of interviewing, brainstorming on the mechanisms of *Movement*

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<sup>25</sup> One person withdrew participation in the research completely and wishes not to be quoted. Two persons withdrew partially, and consented only under the conditions of giving explicit permission for the use of specific quotations interview material and anonymity. The reasons included anxiety about exposure of intimate personal experiences and fear of voicing criticism. Although I feel it is important to represent these voices, of course I have respected their specific requests.

*Medicine* and updating her about the research. Although it would have been interesting to have a longitudinal approach to the research and interview people again over time, unfortunately this was logistically infeasible. Therefore, I chose to speak to a bigger sample of people, rather than interview the same people several times.

Three informants had never worked with Ya'Acov or Susannah Darling Khan at the time of the interview, neither in their previous roles as *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> teachers, nor as current *Movement Medicine* teachers.<sup>26</sup> Even though their experience strictly refers to *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> and not to *Movement Medicine*, I have included insights, transformations or changes they relate to their particular dance, trance, and emotional experiences where relevant for understanding the mechanisms and possibilities of the dance. I believe that the intentions and assumptions of the dance approaches are similar enough to warrant this decision. An overview of the interviews and dates can be consulted in Appendix E.

At some point, the amount of data became quite overwhelming, and I considered it more important to pay thorough, detailed attention to these interviews and the other sources data, rather than maintaining my initial aim of sixty interviews articulated in the research proposal. Due to the shift in focus from the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> to *Movement Medicine* (described in §1.1), also the initial distinction between teachers and participants as research informants was no longer relevant, as Ya'Acov and Susannah Darling Khan, the founders and co-directors of 'School of Movement Medicine' were in effect the only teachers until the end of the research period.<sup>27</sup> The few *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> teachers I interviewed before this shift took place, are also experienced practitioners in *Movement Medicine* and in that role, their contribution is still relevant.

Each interview began with a general explanation followed by open space for questions from the interviewee's side. Then people would sign a participant

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<sup>26</sup> This concerns 'Lunar', interview 15.11.08, 'Rachel', interview 18.11.08, and 'Anonymous', interview 20.11.08. Quotations from these three interviews refer to *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> only, so the reader can choose to interpret these quotes in a different way.

<sup>27</sup> As explained in the Introduction, this situation changed in 2011 when the first three new 'Movement Medicine teachers' were qualified, and many of the 39 'Movement Medicine apprentice teachers' began to teach. They will remain 'apprentice teachers' until their exam, after a minimum of eighteen months of teaching *Movement Medicine* under strict supervision guidelines and meeting several other requirements.



consent form (see Appendix F) and we would proceed to the actual interview, which started with an open question like “please tell me about your experience with *Movement Medicine*.” The interviews unfolded quite naturally. Without much extra encouragement from my side, informants would usually cover most of the research themes, which were mentioned both in the research background information (Appendix D) and at the beginning of the interview.<sup>28</sup> This open structure allowed people to provide information important to them and to express themselves in their own words and at their own speed, so that the meaning they created from their personal experiences could unfold naturally (Bernard, 1994: 209-12; Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 1-2). This fits in the process of ‘double hermeneutics’. I had a checklist with me (see Appendix G) to see if all the ‘themes’ were covered, but in most cases I only needed to ask one or two additional questions.<sup>29</sup> An exception to this were the interviews with Susannah and Ya’Acov Darling Khan, where I used a more structured, though still informal format which would usually depend on the themes that had come up in other interviews and in my own observations. As they could formulate the overall intention of the practice and also comment on their personal teaching style, a different interview agenda felt appropriate to learn about the underlying framework, aims and intentions of *Movement Medicine*. An overview of these questions can be found in Appendix I.

Everyone gave permission to tape record the interview, which I would transcribe afterwards. I transcribed the interviews quite literally, only editing out ‘ers’ and ‘ahs’, unfinished sentences and multiple repetitions of identical words or phrases. When someone would jump to another storyline I edited the secondary story line out, replacing it by (...), and cutting back in when the original story line was taken up again. If the second storyline were informative for the research, I added this in a footnote in the transcription. I sent the informants a copy of the transcription, inviting them to make any changes in the text, (such as editing, adding or removing information). No major changes were suggested. Only after

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<sup>28</sup> These themes were: mental and emotional wellbeing, personal development and growth, healing, transformation, body/mind/spirit, bodily knowledge, movement as a way of knowing, intuition, expanded consciousness or trance, creation of meaning in daily life, connection to divine, source, or ‘spirit’, and perceived differences between *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> and *Movement Medicine*.

<sup>29</sup> For the three ‘written interviews’ I sent guidelines and questions to the interviewee, see Appendix H.

they had given me their consent, would I use the transcription as research data. I always asked people if I could be in touch with any questions as, sometimes, new questions would arise during the transcription. This has worked well. Five of the interviews were conducted in Dutch, when the interviewee and I could speak in our mother tongue. The transcription checked by the informant was in Dutch, and excerpts of the Dutch interviews used in this thesis are my translation. In a few cases, people informed me that the interview started a process of reflection for them that continued after the interview, and some people sent their written reflections to be used as additional data.

The interviewing touched me deeply, for the research as well as personally. Each person shared a very unique window on his/her experience and displayed a wonderful mix of personal qualities and reflection. Without exception, the words seemed to be poured out through the soul, allowing deep, embodied wisdom to come through. My previous research experience<sup>30</sup> already taught me that people are generally willing and open to discussing their experiences for the purpose of research (compare Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 103), but the extremely honest, courageous, intimate and personal responses and the willingness of people to share their story were unexpected and absolutely exceeded my expectations. Thirteen informants I had met prior to the interview, while for the other twelve it was the first time we met or spoke on the day of the interview. Surprisingly, this did not seem to affect the depth with which people shared their story, as it was clear that we shared a common ‘dance language’ and set of experiences. The only obvious difference was that with already familiar people the interview was usually followed by a chat and mutual personal exchange, whereas the relation to new people stayed in a more formal interviewer-participant dynamic.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> As a freelance researcher in social science I was connected to universities, private research institutions and NGOs in the Netherlands for five years, conducting qualitative research on health and wellbeing of various subgroups, including mentally disabled people, patients with chronic bowel disease, burn-out and depression.

<sup>31</sup> Just as the active phase of participant observation had come to a conclusion before I enrolled at the ‘Apprenticeship Programme’, all the interviews (with the exception of the one with Ya’Acov Darling Khan on 23.06.11) were conducted before the start of my Apprenticeship. The last interview was on 04.03.09, and the training started more than three months later, on 29.06.09. During the interviews, I was, as participant, in an equal position to the interviewees who were also in the role of participant. Therefore, my position as apprentice/trainee has not been likely to influence the interviewees’ behavior in relation to me and/or what they chose to discuss and reveal,

### 1.8.3 Newsletter

The third large source of data besides participant observation and qualitative interviews, were the monthly electronic newsletters of the ‘School of Movement Medicine’. These are sent to approximately 5,000 people who are registered on the School’s email list (Roland Wilkinson, personal communication 05.11.09) and are also available online. On the School’s website where I retrieved the material, there are currently five complete volumes available, from 2007 through to 2011. I chose to analyse the first three volumes, from 2007 through to 2009, parallel to the first phase of participant observation.

The newsletter appears between nine and ten times each year, with eight to ten articles in each issue. A total number of 261 articles was published in the first three years, by both participants and teachers. The articles generally describe experiences around a particular workshop, or give an overall description of the writers’ ‘journey’ with the dance, including insights, perceived changes and personal growth. The contributions of the Darling Khans vary from personal anecdotes and experiences to explanations of some aspects of the *Movement Medicine* curriculum. There is a £100 voucher for the best article each month, which is decided by the School’s Administrator and editor Roland Wilkinson and Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan. This voucher can be redeemed at any *Movement Medicine* workshop.

Not all articles were relevant for the purpose of my research. I used 190 of the 261 articles (72%), excluding articles about non-*Movement Medicine* dance events or workshops; invitations for workshops, retreats, balls, festivities; invitations or descriptions of non-dance events, such as a conference on Climate Change or a music festival; advertisements for the School’s music shop; Susannah Darling Khan’s children’s book called *The Walrog* published in separate subsequent episodes; articles without direct relation to the dance regarding local community work, environmental activism or news issues covering subjects such as

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apart from the fact that sharing a similar set of experiences and vocabulary established a mutual base of understanding and trust.

the election of President Barack Obama in 2008;<sup>32</sup> and finally one or two articles with an extremely poor command of English.

The 190 downloaded articles subdivide in 110 written by participants (67 female, 30 male, 13 shared authorship) and 80 by teachers or staff (28 by Ya'Acov, 35 by Susannah, six by both of them; eleven by Roland Wilkinson, Administrator). In the section of 110 articles written by participants that I used in the analysis, some participants contributed more than one article. If we leave out the 13 group articles written by more than two authors, that leaves 97 articles written by 62 different participants (110 minus 13). Of these 62 there were 27 people who wrote one single contribution over those three years. Ten people wrote two articles, one person who wrote three articles, and three people contributed four times.

#### **1.8.4 Other written sources**

Five of the people I interviewed sent me additional information via email, which contained recent reflections on the dance, two articles, an M.A. thesis in art, and a few pages of diary entries related to a topic we had been speaking about in the interviews. In addition to the 25 interviewees, five extra people responded to my research updates in the newsletter by sending some personal writing on their experience with *Movement Medicine*. They too agreed to be quoted in this thesis. Aside from participant observation field notes, the last source of data was my own extensive dance diary, which I kept since 2006. This was written to understand and gain insight in my own personal process and described in detail the experiences and effects of specific exercises and practices.

Examining these additional data offered insights into other parts of the process of meaning making and complemented participant observation, interviews and the newsletter analysis. As some were written privately and shared later, and some were written especially for research purposes, I am aware that these texts were created in different circumstances and contexts, and therefore of a different nature to the interviews and newsletter contributions. Nevertheless, I treated these

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<sup>32</sup> In these instances I did make a reference in my data analysis regarding life style, issues of interest and community building activities.

data similarly, without going into the methodological implications of analysing so called personal ‘ego-documents’ or ‘self-narratives’ (see for example Fulbrook & Rublack, 2010).

## 1.9 Qualitative Analysis

The use of hermeneutic and ethnographic methods is first of all reflected in the way in which the development of ideas and contemplation of the data have been a constant and flexible process throughout the research. Over and over again, I ‘tested’ the emerging theory in interviews and observation (Bernard, 1994: 360; Rubin & Rubin, 1995), which then again informed the theory, representing the ‘hermeneutic circle’ and its ongoing dialogue between detail and overview as well as between other polarities. I was aware of interpretations happening on (at least) two levels: the interpretations of participants and the interpretations of these interpretations by the anthropologist (Bruner, 1986: 10). This compares to ‘simple’ and ‘double’ hermeneutics described above.

Secondly, these methods are visible in the way I treated the various types of data as texts (Geertz, 1973: 452), using the same ethnographic strategies of qualitative analysis for each of the different sources of material, recognising however that the texts reflect a lived and living experience. Bernard defines qualitative analysis as “the search for patterns in data and for ideas that help explain the existence of those patterns” (1994: 360). Building theories is a process of looking and listening for ‘themes’ “that explain why something happened or what something means” and ‘building block ideas’ or ‘concepts’, which “reflect the underlying ideas with which people label their descriptions and understandings of their world” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 57). In this way, the researcher leaves “the definition of the unit of investigation up to the informants, rather than imposing categories derived from our own ever-shifting theoretical frames” (Bruner, 1986: 9). The themes are grouped together and compared within and across categories of informants and themes, finally leading to ‘overarching themes’ that bring “the individual pieces together” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 251-5). To aid this procedure, I

used a software programme for qualitative analysis called HyperRESEARCH™, with which I coded the data. This programme facilitates amongst other things the processing of large quantities of texts, comparing different data sources and finding links between different codes, which have to manually be assigned to sections of the text.

We can view *Movement Medicine* as specific “way of seeing or interpreting the stream of ongoing experience” (Samuel, 1990: 57). “While that ‘context’ is in force, specific items within the stream of experience function as ‘context markers’, marking off significant sequences, and the stream is split up or ‘punctuated’ accordingly” (ibid.). I identified these specific items during the qualitative analysis, using the codebook I designed for this purpose (see Appendix J). I am confident that another researcher would have identified largely the same items. However, I have made certain choices regarding the angle from which to analyse them, and have also had to leave certain issues out that could have been identified as relevant, but for which I had too little data because of the directions the research took. To be specific, the angle from which I analysed the data was largely influenced by the personal experiences that participants described to me, and the meaning they attributed to those experiences (how this practice contributed to their personal transformation). I recognise that I could have emphasised different angles such as learning and education, or communities of practice. One of the issues that did not find its way into this representation very explicitly is for example sexuality. This does not mean that *Movement Medicine* does not or cannot include transformational experiences in individual sexual experience, but rather that I did not lead the interviews by asking for any particular area of transformation, and only two or three interviewees mentioned the sexual area spontaneously. It is therefore only briefly discussed in §6.1.

In the whole process it is important to look closely for consistencies and inconsistencies, to check informants’ stories against other data and to also be open to negative evidence, seek out alternative explanations and to try to fit extreme cases into the theory (Bernard, 1994: 361). This is where I hope to do justice to the method of ‘triple hermeneutics’, aiming to demystify that which is said and done. Parts of people’s stories may be internally inconsistent or contradictory, or based

on implicit rules and unconscious assumptions. Without criticising, challenging or disproving the meaning attributed to experience by participants (Josselson, 2004: 15-6), I attempted to make connections beyond those made by the participant. However, I cannot say how much of the unspoken, the unconscious and the denied I have really noticed. I can only say that I have tried to be alert to these, and to include the not so obvious and the ‘taboos’ in the analysis. Some of the taboos I observed are for example: not wanting to participate in the group dynamic (possibly creating isolation), speaking about uncomfortable aspects in the group or in the participant-teacher interaction, criticising the ‘language’ being used especially with regard to a tendency towards ‘waftiness’ or ungroundedness, calling on the integrity of people ‘walking their talk’, and the ideal of ‘equality’ rather than acceptance of ‘hierarchy’. Although all of these are included on a verbal level, it appeared to me that there are levels of irritation with and dismissal and denial of these aspects. There is a degree of friction between the ideal and its realisation, which is dealt with to the best of the abilities of the people present in the group field at any time. Including the ‘shadow’ by mentioning it and working with it, is not always enough to transcend it, which seems to be the general assumption within *Movement Medicine*. The interviewees who (partially) withdrew their cooperation in the research project, have clearly not felt free to voice criticism. However, none of them were on the ‘Apprenticeship Programme’ and ‘Teacher Training’, where the strength and integrity of the relationship amongst group participants and between participants and teachers, combined with the ground created by working together, allowed for delicate topics to come up and be discussed. Apparently, the training structure is safe or strong enough to overcome this fear of criticism and speak up against the normative current. I have witnessed several strong disagreements or anti-currents being voiced or expressed and yet no one has, to my knowledge, fallen out with each other or with the group. This may show that the fear of the three people who withdrew their participation was based within their own frame of reference rather than having an actual foundation in *Movement Medicine*’s supposed lack of capacity to ‘negotiate’ different voices, although the strong personalities of both Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan may contribute to this fear of speaking up. With the awareness of potential ‘shadows’,

and goodwill to work with them to avoid pitfalls however, *Movement Medicine's* ideals, aims and integrity are operated from a desire of radical inclusion.

Finally, I have also tried to become aware of unconscious drives and motivations within myself, to include “dreams, intuitions, feelings, symptoms, and synchronicities” (Romanyshyn, 2007: 222) in the research and the representation, and to see the research as a separate entity existing in its own right with its own research agenda. This will become apparent in the section on writing and representation below, and is also addressed in Appendix K.

### **1.10 Inclusion of the Subjective: on Autoethnography, Writing and Representation**

Despite the self being recognised by some anthropologists as the key fieldwork tool and authors tentatively, or more openly, admitting to a subjective approach as we saw in §1.7.1, the majority of fieldwork literature still concerns the research *role* rather than the researcher's *self*. An exception to this is ‘autoethnography’, “an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand cultural experience (*ethno*)” and as a method, it is “both process and product” (Ellis et al., 2011, italics in original). Also, the term autoethnography is often used to describe various kinds of writing, which include a blurring of stylistic genres, and addresses questions regarding the truth of a representation (Anderson, 2006: 373). The boundary between researcher and researched is not straightforward, and the researcher has to become “*visibly* accountable for her/his presence” (Chavez, 2008: 490, italics in original). I fully underline the ‘both... and’ features of the method: “both personal and scholarly, both evocative and analytical, (...) both descriptive and theoretical” (Burnier, 2006: 414), or in other words the assumption that “research can be rigorous, theoretical, and analytical *and* emotional, therapeutic, and inclusive of personal and social phenomena” (Ellis et al., 2011, italics in original).

My research meets elements of autoethnography such as complete member status, self-reflexivity, using a variety of methods and sources of data, and data



collection and analysis happening in cycles alongside each other (Ellis et al., 2011, compare the hermeneutic circle as described in §1.5). It also included “dialogue with informants beyond the self,” and “commitment to theoretical analysis” (Anderson, 2006: 378). Although the method has the ability to transcend dichotomies, I believe it is of utmost importance to meet the standards of ethnography. I have done this by doing a substantial amount of fieldwork, including a fair number of research participants, using triangulation of methods and a thorough analysis of the data, which are some of the areas in which the autoethnographic approach is criticised (Ellis et al., 2011). However, I have not attempted to include the personal narrative very visibly in the representation (Anderson, 2006: 378) nor to use different textual features such as story telling, character and plot development, and “alternations of authorial voice” (Ellis et al., 2011), the reasons for which are outlined below. In that sense, my writing, although aimed at being eligible for a wide audience, is probably not sufficiently ‘artful’ to classify as autoethnography (ibid.).

### ***1.10.1 An experiment in embodied research and writing***

Autoethnography is a methodology that serves the purpose of transparency, by including what is necessary to understand about the researcher’s self/selves. Also, according to Shulamit Reinharz, “understanding the self in fieldwork releases us from the epistemological tension between unreflexive positivism, on the one hand, and navel gazing, on the other. It will help us document how and why the self is the key fieldwork tool” (Reinharz, 1997: 18). For this purpose she describes approximately twenty different selves divided in three general categories of ‘research-based selves’, ‘brought selves’, and ‘situationally created selves’ (1997: 5). Although each research situation is different, the ‘research-based selves’ will be more or less the same for each researcher, including for example ‘being sponsored’, ‘being a good listener’, ‘being a temporary member’, ‘being an

academic', 'being a person who is leaving' (Reinharz, 1997: 5-11).<sup>33</sup> In this fashion, the selves I brought to the research were being a woman, a partner, Dutch, well educated and middle class, white, born in 1977, being a dancer, a *Movement Medicine* participant, a daughter and, for whom this is of interest, a Libra. Like Reinharz, I also developed friendships during my research, so being a friend and being emotionally affected by the workshops were selves that were situationally created (Reinharz, 1997: 5).<sup>34</sup>

Although I appreciate Reinharz' attempt to create transparency, it is interesting to note that she only selectively explains some of the selves, mainly focusing on the 'research based selves'. This seems to hide more than it reveals and certainly does not give much understanding of the person who conducted the research. They are labels that situate the researcher in a certain cultural segment, giving some indication of the frameworks in which she operates. What is missing however, I would call 'psyche and soul related'. What motivations, drives and beliefs shape her life? What inspired her to do the research? How did her 'self' really show up in the field? This does require a balancing act between pretending to (superficially) include the researcher on the one hand and a confessional (self-indulgent) autobiography on the other (Wallis, 2003: 8), and also an "admittance of the truth of 'unreality'" (Grau, 1999: 172) or that which is not (yet) known or cannot be expressed.

To include the subjective experience of myself in many roles of which the researcher role was for this project in the forefront, I initially experimented with a text-layout that clearly distinguished between the body of data and theory on the one hand, and my personal subjective reflection and responses to that on the other, by dividing the text into two columns. The left and largest column would consist of the 'conventional' data and theory description, analysis and reflections, trying carefully to meet the scholarly requirements of the ethnographic tradition. The right column would contain quotations, poems, parts of my diary, visual imagery, a song

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<sup>33</sup> The latter is in my case is not relevant, as my role as a *Movement Medicine* practitioner means that there is no real exit from the field and my participation continues after the research without goodbyes (see also P. A. Adler & Adler, 1997).

<sup>34</sup> Compare the practice of 'bracketing' presuppositions and biases in phenomenological research, and the research being "a constitutive element of the hermeneutic circle [which] must speak his or her own positioning in the world" (Josselson, 2004: 10-11).

title here, thoughts and feelings there, associations, questions and whatever else popped up while writing. The texts in both columns would obviously come through and from the same source (the researcher as tool), but were also distinctly different, feeding and influencing each other. This division was not meant to create another duality, but rather intended to make a bridge between personal reflections and the academic guidelines of PhD writing, in an easily editable format.<sup>35</sup> In a way, the two columns would ‘dance’ with each other, being in dialogue, and responding to each other. This was for me both an exercise in being human, and my answer to Romanyshyns’ challenge for research with ‘soul in mind’ (2007). I also intended to invite the reader to join in this experiment of representation and of analysis, by freely adding your own associations, inspirations, feelings, sudden thoughts and doodles in ‘the other’ column as well, to give a space for your physical, mental and emotional responses to this text and, in the words of Eve Ensler, to treat this dissertation like a ‘living thing’ (Ensler, 2010). In this way you too would interact and dance with the text as an instrument for communication, as an experience provoking subject, as ‘partner’ with whom you are engaging and exploring this topic in co-creation, rather than just reading about experiences of others. This invitation to engage readers with their own personal emergent experience, is one of the aims of autoethnography as well: “to understand a self or some aspect of a life as it intersects with a cultural context, connect[s] to other participants as co-researchers, and invite readers to enter the author’s world and to use what they learn there to reflect on, understand, and cope with their own lives” (Ellis et al., 2011).

However, I decided not to carry this experience through in the thesis.<sup>36</sup> Although I enjoyed the experience, especially ‘stretching’ what I took as traditional writing conventions, its added value as scholarly work seemed indeed limited and more of a confessional nature. I also became aware of the delicate balance between

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<sup>35</sup> I immensely enjoyed reading the explanation of Bartimaeus the Djinn in *The Amulet of Samarkand* (Stroud, 2003) of how his mind works on several conscious levels at once. “By and large, humans can only manage one conscious level, with a couple of more or less unconscious ones muddling along underneath. Think of it this way: I could read a book with four different stories typed one on top of the other, and take them all in with the same sweep of my eyes. The best I can do for you [humans] is *footnotes*” (Stroud, 2003: 213n).

<sup>36</sup> This does, of course, not mean you cannot still dance with the text!

openness and vulnerability, for others and myself. As I did not have the option of remaining anonymous, just how much would I want to expose? And discriminating between what to expose and what not, how ‘truthful’ would that representation be? Nevertheless, I hope to experiment with it again in other, more appropriate, places. I have however explored the category of ‘brought selves’ (Reinharz, 1997) or ‘individual modal states’ (Samuel, 1990) a little further in Appendix K. This introduces more of the person *behind* the researcher including a reflection on personal values and an attempt to bring some of the unconscious above board, both that of myself and of the research.

One of my personal aims during writing, was to consciously *feel* and *embody* each word, being touched by each sentence that I wrote in this thesis (compare Nabhan-Warren, 2011; A. Young, 2011). Of course I can only access my own life experiences fully (and only that bit of which I am conscious!), and neither I, nor anyone, can ever fully know another’s experiences (compare Bruner, 1986: 5). However, I wanted to feel the *impact* of it with and in my own body, and register the reactions that came up while engaging with both theory and data, with both abstract concepts and concrete experiences of research participants. Movement has not only been the *topic* of this thesis, but also often the *medium* through which I found the necessary clarity to formulate and express in words the complex tapestry of movement, transformation and meaning. It was as if my body in movement acted as translator to make the unconscious conscious, and so helped to shape the sentences in my mind. Some of the concepts I wrote about would form themselves on a bodily level first, before taking form in words and left-brain writing. I have tried to take the concept of the ‘anthropologist as instrument’ quite literally and therefore, this thesis is a particular reflection of *Movement Medicine* that has actually found its way through my moving, feeling, sensing, thinking body (compare Fleckenstein, 1999; Nabhan-Warren, 2011; Ness, 1996; Potter, 2008; Deidre Sklar, 2000). This, again, compares to autoethnography in which, in the words of Tami Spry, the “text emerges from the researcher’s bodily standpoint as she is continually recognizing and interpreting the residue traces of culture inscribed upon her hide from interacting with others in context,” as such recognising “the living body/subjective self of the researcher (...) as a salient part

of the research process” (Spry, 2001: 711, see also Nabhan-Warren, 2011: 381). In autoethnography, unlike in positivist dualistic scholarship, the body is seen as a literate entity, with ‘enfleshed knowledge’ (Spry, 2001: 724). Including this type of knowledge and knowledge production “requires that we view knowledge in the context of the body from which it is generated” (ibid.: 725), as “the ethnographer’s body is deeply entwined with the lifeworld” (Nabhan-Warren, 2011: 384). Issues with regard to the gendered body are briefly discussed in §3.2.7.

### ***1.10.2 Representation and Choices: Writing as Weaving, Thesis as Tapestry***

The representation of fieldwork data in ethnographies changes over time, according to the views on cultural analysis and especially the understanding of the role of the researcher in the process. As ‘products’ of the anthropological enterprise, ethnographies and writing styles are subject to much debate, and also leave room for experiments and innovation (see for example James Clifford, 1988; James Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Marcus & Fischer, 1999 [1986]). I subscribe to a mild postmodern scepticism towards ‘a’ reality that can be described clearly and concisely, as I believe, with Spry, that “reality is always and already a social construction” (Spry, 2001: 727). Therefore, its representation is also no more than a construction, and any generalisation of claims is, to some extent, problematic (compare Anderson, 2006: 373; Burnier, 2006: 410). In the words of Theresa Buckland: “‘The truth’ is a kaleidoscope of possibilities and, in the field, it depends who is lifting that kaleidoscope to his or her eye, when and in what direction it is pointing” (T. J. Buckland, 1999a: 205). What follows are some thoughts and observations regarding the process of writing and representation during this research project, with the analogy of the writing process as weaving, and the thesis as ‘tapestry’.

First of all, the individual experiences and interpretations of *Movement Medicine* participants are very diverse. For some, the practice has become a way of life, others emphasise the practical tools or life skills they gain through it. Others again use it largely to work with healing trauma or see it particularly as their spiritual practice. Each of these ‘applications’ or ‘implementations’ represents a

segment or area to which *Movement Medicine* can contribute. Also, the degree to which people integrate this practice into their lives varies from person to person. Some do a workshop every now and then, whereas others continue to engage with the practice at home. Furthermore, *Movement Medicine* is still a very ‘young’ practice, so at times it was tangible that the framework was changing as the research went along, as the approach is still developing. This thesis is one particular representation of this diversity. I have tried to weave together all the different voices in such a manner that one type of experience naturally follows another, placing them in a larger frame of reference, and letting meaning and patterns emerge from the different yarns. Again, this is not to say that every *Movement Medicine* participant encounters all of the described experiences or places similar emphasis on different parts of the practice.

Although this thesis contains, like a tapestry, the threads of all people who contributed, the red and the blue, the cotton, the silk and the wool, it was me at the loom, making decisions during the entire research process. Firstly, these decisions were influenced by my personal understanding of the practice. For example, the interviews initially zoomed in on elements that I (had) personally experienced as relevant, and topics such as gender, which I had not considered, remained largely uncovered. Fortunately, the open structure of the interviews, and also the inclusion of newsletter articles (which were written without any research agenda) did allowed other topics to come up that I had not foreseen at the start of the research. Examples of this are the importance of community and issues around self-confidence. Secondly, my decisions were shaped not only by my own experiences as a dancer but also by many serendipitous coincidences and encounters.<sup>37</sup> I would stumble across books or theories quite accidentally, in the library, on Internet, or through conversations with people. People I spoke with, saw parallels between this and other work, and would encourage me to follow a specific thread. The variety of input was phenomenal. *Movement Medicine* was discussed from the angles of

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<sup>37</sup> The Oxford Handy Dictionary defines ‘serendipity’, a term coined by Horace Walpole, as the “faculty of making happy discoveries by accident” (F. G. Fowler & Fowler, 1986 [1978]: 827). ‘Serendipity’ also happens to be the name of a tearoom with delicious cakes in Torquay, where I found many hours of both inspiration for and refuge from the writing business. There are no coincidences!

consciousness, shamanism, psychology, archetypes, transformation, mediation, meditation, dance, spirituality, philosophy, nature, community, trance and activism. This diversity shows that the practice has much in common with other disciplines. It also made it difficult to choose what threads to follow (and hence, which to exclude). Finally, insights would trickle through while I was dancing. All these have informed and shaped the research project. Again during the analysis and writing phases, I had to make countless choices of how to structure the chapters, how to present the data, what to include and what to omit, and where to elaborate on debates and findings in anthropology and other disciplines. It was fascinating to see many different images emerging in the weaving. Besides the very concrete ‘tools’ such as participant observation, qualitative interviews, and qualitative analysis, the actual research process and approach in practice proved to be infinitely more coincidental, haphazard, chaotic, spontaneous and intuitive than I expected. Many times, I thought that at least ten different ‘tapestries’ or theses could have been created from the same material,<sup>38</sup> due to the complexity of *Movement Medicine* and its many variables, knowing that, had I arranged them in a different way, other patterns might have shown. Coherency however, also appears in the *process* of writing and sharing (Andrée Grau, personal communication 16.03.12).

The question is: is what I present here recognisable by people in the *Movement Medicine* community? Does it mirror their conception of themselves and of this practice? This is what Ellis et al. (2011) call ‘generalizability’. Being an insider myself, I believe that the answer to these questions is yes, but obviously not entirely. According to Marilyn Strathern, “there is always a discontinuity between indigenous understandings and the analytical concepts which frame the ethnography itself” (M. Strathern, 1987: 18). The ‘indigenous reflection’ (ibid.) of people who participated in this study is incorporated as I used concepts and overarching themes which I derived directly from the data, and included feedback

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<sup>38</sup> Or as many as ten for each participant, as each would bring their own points of view and angles of understanding, and would recognise different emerging patterns.

on findings.<sup>39</sup> At the same time my understanding, likewise, reflects my insider's perspective. Nevertheless, I hope this particular representation does do justice to the depth and riches of the *Movement Medicine* 'experience tapestry', that it is recognisable to those who teach and practice it, and of clarity and interest to those who have not danced *Movement Medicine*, trusting that my particular interpretation provides, paraphrasing Wallis' words, a suitable overview of this phenomenon (2003: 18). Whether it affects the reader and initiates a dialogue is equally important (Ellis et al., 2011).

For me personally, it has been an exercise in accepting that much more could be said about virtually any topic featuring in this thesis. I hope that I will have other opportunities to deepen this material. This is the form that was ultimately solidified into concrete chapters, sections, phrases and words, although other forms may have been no less realistic and true. Like *Movement Medicine* itself is not a complete, finished 'product', neither is this thesis. The process of writing up is not just the last stage of this research, but rather only "one privileged moment in the ethnographic enterprise" (Gore, 1999: 208) which will continue moving, moving between the lines, between the paragraphs, moving (between) the pages and the reader, and will continue moving on dance floors in real life.

This chapter situated the research theoretically and methodologically. Now the *Movement Medicine* practice, cosmology and business approach will be introduced, described and positioned within a wider cultural context.

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<sup>39</sup> I asked for feedback on findings twice. This was responded to well, with around twelve reactions each time (approximately 25%).



## **Chapter 2: *Movement Medicine*'s Cosmology and Framework**

*Movement Medicine* emerged from the long-term collaboration of two people, through their life experience and exposure to different approaches of dance, healing and shamanism. As outlined before, this thesis is the first comprehensive academic description of the practice, and the information included in this chapter is derived from the first book by Ya'Acov and Susannah Darling Khan (2009), workshops that I attended over the years, the 'School of Movement Medicine' website, interviews with the Darling Khans and conversations with other *Movement Medicine* practitioners. One of the things that soon become obvious while studying this practice, is the variety of methods and techniques that are brought together from different traditions all over the world. This blending and mixing may be a characteristic of modern or postmodern culture in general, but also fits the approach of alternative spiritualities, as we have seen in the Introduction. To understand the practice's views and methods, we will have a closer look at the traditions that influenced it. Then we will outline the symbolism of *Movement Medicine* and the approach of the 'School of Movement Medicine' as a business, to establish the ground for the analysis in order to comprehend the practice, its representations and the experiences of participants.

### **2.1 Development of *Movement Medicine***

#### **2.1.1 *Personal background of the Founders***

*Movement Medicine* is a distillation of elements from many of the traditions that the Darling Khans have studied that made a difference for them personally, and that they saw worked for other persons as well. While Susannah Darling Khan dreamt the name *Movement Medicine* in 2002, Ya'Acov Darling Khan received a vision of what would later become the *Movement Medicine* mandala (or logo) during a ceremony with shamans in the heart of the Peruvian Amazon in the summer of 2005, which he too had originally seen in a dream (Darling Khan &

Darling Khan, 2009: xix –xxii). *Movement Medicine* can be considered as the result of the ‘dreaming’ through the use of visionary techniques of two people in a position of authority, guided both by revelatory experiences and by practical experience (compare Samuel, 1990: 131).

Up until the end of 2011, *Movement Medicine* could not be seen separately from its founders, who created the practice according to their views, interests, experiences and education. Susannah Darling Khan’s background consists of a degree in anthropology (UCL London, 1<sup>st</sup> Class Hons, 1986) and working as a Gestalt psychotherapist (qualified at the Gestalt Centre in London, 1988). Ya’Acov Darling Khan studied visual communication (West Midlands, 1986) (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: xviii and personal communication 13.02.12). Both of them have been shaped by non-violent direct action within the peace movement in the eighties and by their long-term and ongoing work in shamanism, including an apprenticeship with “the Deer Tribe Metis Sun Dance path,” and training and working with shamans and medicine people from around the world (ibid.: xviii).

### **2.1.2 Shamanic Techniques**

*Movement Medicine* is strongly informed and structured by a variety of shamanic traditions especially from North and South America and Scandinavia. Shamanism and its functions are defined as ideology, social phenomenon, healing practice, or set of techniques applicable in many different circumstances. It is usually not considered as a religion in itself, but rather as a set of tools that can be recognised in many cultural traditions (Eliade, 1972 [1951]: 8).<sup>40</sup> Although shamanic techniques are found all over the world, the concept ‘shamanism’ is originally derived from central Asia and Siberia because it was there that travellers first documented shamanic elements integrated in an entire ideological structure (Eliade, 1972 [1951]: 4). ‘Saman’ was what the Evenki people of Eastern Siberia called their ‘spirit medium’ or ‘priest’, although this term was originally foreign to

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<sup>40</sup> According to Eliade shamanism generally “coexists with other forms of magic and religion” (Eliade, 1972 [1951]: 5): “We shall find shamanism within a considerable number of religions, for shamanism always remains an ecstatic technique (...) and represents, as it were, the mysticism of the particular religion” (ibid.: 8; see also Jakobsen, 1999: 5, 222).

tungusic languages (ibid.: 496). Words with similar meaning and phonetics are found in Pali ('s(h)amana') and Sanskrit ('Sramana') (ibid.: 4, 495-6), and influences of Buddhism and Lamaism have shaped the expression of Asian and Siberian shamanism. Largely through Eliade's work (1972 [1951]), this concept later became descriptive of all similar practices, even though there is no general definition or theory of shamanism that scholars agree on. Some suggest instead the use of the term shamanisms, to do justice to local, cultural and historical variations (see for example Atkinson, 1992).

Despite many cultural variations, and also changes within specific traditions over time, several concepts and techniques are often mentioned with regard to shamanic world views and belief systems (see for example Jakobsen, 1999; Walter & Neumann Fridman, 2004; Winkelman, 2004b), even though different authors place different emphases on what they see as most important. As *Movement Medicine* is strongly inspired by shamanic traditions, I will introduce these characteristics briefly. A shaman acts as a mediator between the profane and the sacred, the human and spirit world. Using ecstatic trance (s)he can access power and knowledge for maintaining or restoring individual and community health and balance, and sometimes for divinatory purposes (Glass-Coffin, 2010: 207; Jakobsen, 1999: 1; Morris, 2006: 42; Sylvan, 2005: 149). However, some authors challenge the image of the shaman sustaining and maintaining balance, and underline the disruption of conceptual, psychic and social order (Atkinson, 1992). Other elements include a strong relationship with the natural world and recognition of interconnection and mutual exchange, the use of altered states of consciousness and journeying out of the body to work with spirit guides, power animals and teachers in the upper, middle and lower worlds, and the use of ceremony. Chapter 3 addresses the 'translation' of shamanisms to western settings, and how the underlying concepts of *Movement Medicine* are similar and different to traditional and neo-shamanic approaches.

### 2.1.3 *Dance and Movement*

One of the movement practices that strongly influenced *Movement Medicine* is the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> developed by Gabrielle Roth in the 1960s. This was one of the somatic and movement practices embedded in the Human Potential Movement, aiming at transformation, self-exploration and healing. As a movement teacher at Esalen Institute, Roth noticed that people seemed to move their bodies in a natural sequence through five different expressions of movement and being (Gabrielle Roth & Loudon, 1990: 18). From this insight she developed the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> practice, influenced also by many different indigenous and world traditions such as shamanism, trance-dance, mystical and eastern philosophy, Gestalt therapy and transpersonal psychology. *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> consists of free improvisational movement through five successive ‘rhythms’. These do not refer to musical rhythms such as 3/4 or 4/4, but rather to different ‘qualities’ expressed in both music and movement. The rhythms are called: ‘Flowing’, ‘Staccato’, ‘Chaos’, ‘Lyrical’, and ‘Stillness’. Although there is no correct or prescribed way of dancing a rhythm, and the participants “are encouraged to (...) surrender to their personal interpretation of each rhythm” (Juhan, 2003: 85), there are general feeling-tones, specific body parts, and elements connected to each of the rhythms.<sup>41</sup> The *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> practice is now well established, with about 240 teachers worldwide,<sup>42</sup> and approximately one million people having danced the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> (Hogya, 2004: 9). Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan were part of Gabrielle Roth’s core staff for nearly twenty years, during ten of which they co-directed the UK Moving Centre School, representing the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> in Europe. *Movement Medicine* developed during this time (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: xix).

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<sup>41</sup> The descriptions of the five different rhythms and their associations can come across as quite stereotypical. ‘Flow’ for example, has a non-stop, fluid, circular movement quality, with emphasis on the feet. It relates to the Feminine and to the element Earth. In ‘Staccato’, movements are angular, defined, and focused. This rhythm is connected to masculine energy and to the element Fire, and accentuates the hips. ‘Chaos’ aims at letting go of control, with a loose head and soft spine. The music is ‘tribal’ and fast, with the highest number of beats per minute. This rhythm is most likely to induce trance, although trance is definitely not limited to ‘Chaos’. ‘Lyrical’ has an airy and playful feel to it, focussing on the arms and hands to create “a light emptiness, a freedom, a sense of ease or mindless effortlessness” (Juhan, 2003: 86). Finally, ‘Stillness’ offers time to slow down, to integrate the dance experience and ‘rest’ in the movement. Many people lie on the floor or move silently in their own internal world.

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.gabrielleroth.com>, accessed January 2, 2012.

*Movement Medicine* is also informed by the work of Helen Poynor who trained with Suprpto Suryodamo (Java) and Anna Halprin (San Francisco). Poynor developed the ‘Walk of Life’ approach in which ‘non-stylised movement’, often in natural environments, stimulates “transforming personal explorations into creative expression.”<sup>43</sup> The Darling Khans have been working with her “individually and as a couple since 1991,” and consider this as a key part of their personal movement practice (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: xix).

#### **2.1.4 Environmental awareness**

Both Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan are trained as facilitators of the ‘Be the Change Symposium’,<sup>44</sup> which is concerned with collectively finding new answers to worldwide problems such as climate change, pollution, and decrease of natural resources.<sup>45</sup> The symposium was created by the Pachamama Alliance in answer to the plea of the Achuar people in the Ecuador and Peruvian rainforests to “change the dream of the modern world,” to make a shift away from over-consumption towards choices that honour and sustain life.<sup>46</sup> Their mission aspires to bring forth “an environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling, socially just human presence on this planet.”<sup>47</sup> These values are integrated in *Movement Medicine* in business policy, personal commitment of the teachers and collecting money for charities through workshops such as ‘The Long Dance’ Ceremony, and political initiative which evolved via websites *Six Billion Reasons* to *Mosaic: EARTH to One World Mosaic*, now part of the *OneWorldGroup* website. There, everyone “from parents to presidents [can] express their longing to protect life on earth,” and can find information on climate conferences, new sustainable forms of transportation, solar

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<sup>43</sup> <http://www.walkoflife.co.uk>, accessed October 28, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> This symposium is called “Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream” in the USA, <http://awakeningthedreamer.org/about-atd/>, accessed March 29, 2011.

<sup>45</sup> <http://bethechange.org.uk/> accessed January 19, 2012.

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.pachamama.org/about-us/origin-story>, accessed January 19, 2012.

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.pachamama.org/about/> accessed March 29, 2011.

power and other solutions.<sup>48</sup> Sometimes *Movement Medicine* participants organise dance events in public places to raise awareness for certain topics.<sup>49</sup>

### 2.1.5 ‘Family Constellations’

Bert Hellinger’s approach of ‘Family Constellations’ has been translated to a movement setting and integrated into *Movement Medicine*. The approach is also called ‘Family Systems psychotherapy’, although Hellinger stresses that it is wider than psychotherapy as it can be applied to many more situations (Hellinger & Longstaff, 2001: 6). It is practiced in groups, where individuals take turns in positioning and repositioning themselves and their substitute family members, who are represented by other participants in the group. In this ‘constellation’, certain family issues can be addressed, balanced and/or released (Stiefel et al., 2002). It is informed by a phenomenological inquiry into the unknown and ‘the greater whole’, by the ancestor reverence that Hellinger encountered in the Zulu culture during his time as a missionary, and by family systems therapy which uses family sculptures to “reveal underlying systemic conflicts” (D. B. Cohen, 2006: 229). The approach follows a certain format in which the client has the initiative. Once the other participants are positioned as the client’s family members, “the representatives tune into the resonance of the family field, accessing kinesthetic and emotional data” and a “three-dimensional portrait of the family” emerges (ibid.: 230). This process is reported to somehow have a beneficial effect on the family members beyond the client in the workshop (Hellinger & Longstaff, 2001: 9; Mason Boring, 2001: 38). In the end of each ‘constellation’ there is a formal role release so people can step out of their ritual role. *Movement Medicine* includes exercises in which participants work with for example representatives of their father and mother (‘Initiation’), or with representatives of their past, present and future (‘Apprenticeship Programme’). It is also applied in large settings to work with group dynamics and issues that need to be addressed. The ‘Teacher Training 2011’ included

<sup>48</sup> <http://oneworldgroup.org/oneclimate-community-mosaic>, accessed January 19, 2012.

<sup>49</sup> For example flash mob dances of ‘the Hustle’ in Totnes, London and Cape Town on 11.11.11, to celebrate ‘Interconnectedness of Life on Earth,’ organised by Alex Hanley and Carey Yarrow (Susannah Darling Khan, newsletter 11.11).

‘constellations’ regarding ‘learning and the educational system’ and ‘financial issues’, having representatives of ‘participants’, ‘teachers’ in general and the ‘Darling Khans’ in particular, the ‘School of Movement Medicine’ and ‘money’.

### **2.1.6 Other influences**

*Movement Medicine* is also influenced by psychotherapy. Aside from Susannah Darling Khan’s background in Gestalt Psychotherapy, all three of the ‘School of Movement Medicine’s’ staff members, Sue Kuhn, David Rose and Jo Hardy are registered psychotherapists. This influence becomes apparent in communication style, in techniques for enhancing social skills, and in exercises in which people look at patterns in the psyche that lead to certain action and behaviour, which are then danced in a ritual sequence. This includes receiving information about how or why this pattern came to be established originally, what part of the personality was ‘protected’ by that, and how it can be integrated once more as an ‘ally’ rather than as an ‘opponent’. The use of archetypes such as ‘the wise old man or woman’, ‘the shadow’, and the language of ‘being and becoming’ seem clearly influenced by especially Jung’s theories (see for example Jung, 1971 [1959]).

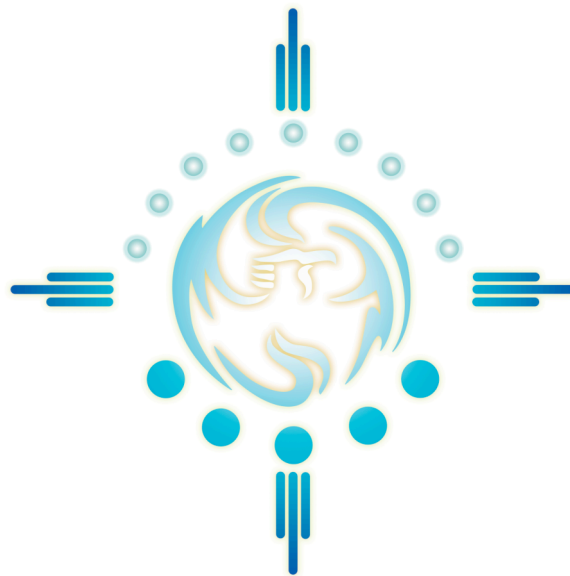
Finally, Susannah Darling Khan’s interest in ‘devotional voice’, vocal technique, musical theory and song writing has also become part of *Movement Medicine*, both in the theme of specific workshops such as *Resonance* and *DanSing*, but also in general through freeing the voice through singing songs together and performing ritual theatre (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: xviii). Yoga is strongly recommended as additional practice, because the prescribed form, the clarity of postures and the building of physical strength and suppleness complement the free dance style (Susannah Darling Khan, newsletter 10.07), and a recent addition of early 2011 concerns ‘Laughter Yoga’ (field notes 19.01.11).

Now I will introduce the ‘mandala’ as primary symbol through which the *Movement Medicine* practice is articulated. This symbol seems to unify disparate aspects, integrating different traditions and other symbols within it such as the Tree

of Life, the Phoenix, the four elements, and the symbolism of journeying through different gateways.

## 2.2 The Mandala

The ‘mandala’ is a stylised, visual representation of a dream and later a vision that Ya’Acov Darling Khan had in the Peruvian Amazon in the summer of 2005 (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: xix –xxii), see Figure 1 below. It is used as business logo, while it also gives shape to the energetic field of the practice (Ya’Acov Darling Khan, interview 23.06.11), and functions as a ‘map’ for accessing gateways to the soul (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: xix –xxii).



*Figure 1: Movement Medicine mandala<sup>50</sup>*

In the first two years of the ‘School of Movement Medicine’, the mandala was also referred to as ‘medicine wheel’. However over the course of 2008-2009, Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan stopped using this term, for no specific reason

<sup>50</sup> Included with permission (Ya’Acov Darling Khan, personal communication 08.01.10; and Roland Wilkinson, personal communication 09.01.10).



(Susannah Darling Khan, interview 28.01.10). It is interesting to note that the terms ‘medicine wheel’, ‘mandala’ and ‘mesa’ (see §4.3.1) all refer to similar phenomena, but come from different traditions and cultures: ‘medicine wheel’ comes from the native American tradition in North America, ‘mandala’ is used in Buddhist practices and ‘mesa’ comes from south American practices (Chris Lüttichau, personal communication 22.12.11).

Mandalas, from the Sanskrit word for ‘circle’, are symbolic, often circular diagrams, representing a pattern of existence or ‘imago mundi’ (Cooper, 1978: 103). Jung considered the mandala as “a special category of symbols” (Jung, 1971 [1959]: 355), as birthplaces “in which a Buddha comes to life” (ibid.: 130). He described how in Tibetan Buddhism mandalas are used as ritual instruments to assist meditation and concentration, while in alchemy they represented the “synthesis of the four elements which are forever tending to fall apart” (ibid.: 387). Cooper considered mandalas as “re-enactment of the cosmic drama and a pilgrimage of the soul” (1978: 103). These different meanings of mandala symbolism are all apparent in *Movement Medicine* mandala, of which the different components are discussed below as a guideline to describe the ‘building blocks’ of the practice, and making an effort to construe and unravel the underlying cosmology.

The *Movement Medicine* mandala consists of 21 different aspects that together constitute the practice: the place of the centre (1), yin and yang (2), the elements (4), the ‘dimensions of awareness’ (5) and the ‘gateways’ (9), which are explained below. We can consider these symbols as part of the observable characteristics and language of the practice, which give insight in the communications within a specific culture (compare Yalman, 1964: 115). According to Mary Douglas, symbols can be classified in many different ways, specific or vague, ambivalent or clear, simple or complex. The meaning of what she called ‘diffuse symbols’ is difficult to analyse (Douglas, 1973 [1970]: 29). Any given symbol communicates something about the social structure in which it originates, and does not carry an isolated meaning by itself. The symbol’s meaning is derived “from its relation to other symbols in a pattern” (ibid.: 11). The same goes for their interpretation, which, according to Douglas, is always socially determined (ibid.:

26-7). She emphasised not the specific symbolic features or attributes of a religious structure or system, but the way people use them “as regulators or as channels of power” (ibid.: 30). At the same time it is important not to over-systematise sets of symbols, which do not necessarily “exhibit formal coherence,” or consider them as a complete set (Samuel, 1990: 90). Its complete-ness can be measured in terms of how the symbolic set meets “the demands of social life” (Samuel, 1990: 90). We will return to this in Chapter 8 when we look at participants’ integration of their experiences in daily life.

Although reading about the complex symbolism of the *Movement Medicine* mandala below may raise questions about the accessibility of the practice, it is entirely unnecessary to have any prior knowledge or understanding of it for participating meaningfully in any *Movement Medicine* workshop. People can just explore their dance, guided by instructions of the teacher in the moment. However, for the purpose of this thesis, it is important to elucidate the different aspects of the mandala in detail.

### 2.2.1 ‘The Centre’

Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan begin their description of the mandala with a reference to its centre as “still point, the silence, the void and the emptiness.” They see this as the “the place of all potential” from which “all manifestation arises and to which it returns” (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 3). This is similar to Cooper’s description that a mandala’s centre “is also the point from which space is produced, from which motion emanates and form arises (1978: 32). A centre has connotations of wholeness, origin of existence, the world axis, potential, totality of all possibilities, and the point where all opposites disappear (ibid.). This corresponds with the *Movement Medicine* notion that “out of this [centre] arises the “eternal dance of polarity, the dance between yin and yang, being and doing, receptivity and action, dark and light, Earth and sky, acceptance and intention,” which the Darling Khans see as the foundation of creation (2009: 3). In the *Movement Medicine* mandala, yin and yang are not visible as the familiar circle with a white and a black segment, but are represented by the blue swirls on either

side of the inner circle. The original meaning however is upheld. This symbol depicts the dual distribution and perfect balance of two opposite forces in the universe which are “the active or masculine principle (*Yang*) and the passive or feminine principle (*Yin*)” (Cirlot, 1971: 380; see also Cooper, 1978: 196-7). Each contains “the embryo of the other power, implying that there is no exclusively masculine or feminine nature, but that each contains the germ of the other and there is perpetual alternation” (Cooper, 1978: 196-7). Although according to Cooper the yin always comes before the yang, as ‘primordial darkness’ is followed by the ‘light of creation’ (ibid.), it nevertheless perfectly balances “the pure essence which is neither yet both. The two forces are held together in tension, but not in antagonism, as mutually interdependent partners; one in essence but two in manifestation” (ibid.).

In the centre of the *Movement Medicine* mandala the dance of polarities is also represented by two other symbols, the Tree of Life and the Phoenix “resting in its branches” (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 5). The former is again not literally visible, although the five circles in the lower half of the circle are seen as its roots, and the nine dots in the upper half of the circle as its crown. The Tree of Life, the World Tree, the Tree of Knowledge or the Cosmic Tree are recognised in many different traditions. In the teachings of the Cabbalah for example, every human being is considered as a potential tree of life (Colin, 2000: 501), and in shamanic cultures the Tree is a symbol for the lower, middle and upper worlds (Eliade, 1972 [1951]; Halifax, 1982).<sup>51</sup> The Darling Khans embrace these notions and also consider the Tree of Life as “a symbol of communion between the physical Earth world and the spiritual heights” (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 5). As the Cosmic Tree is considered as one of the traditional symbols of the centre (Cooper, 1978: 32), this can be seen as another elaboration and deepening of

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<sup>51</sup> Various tree specimen are and have been considered sacred in different cultures and times. In Norse mythology for example Yggdrasil the Ash tree, suspended Odin for nine days and is the centre and representation of many different worlds (Otten, 1994). Birch and Oak were revered by North Germanic and Central European cultures (De Cleene & Lejeune, 1999). In India the Buddha was said to have gained enlightenment under the ‘Peepal’ tree, now revered as the ‘Bodhi Tree’ (<http://www.ecoindia.com/flora/trees/>, accessed 14.02.12). The symbolism of world trees seems to rest more on the metaphoric meanings of roots, trunk and branches, the connection between earth and sky and possibly other worlds, and the metaphor for planting, growing and harvesting than on the importance of the particular species of tree.

this theme. To what extent the choices for this symbolism have been made consciously, or whether they happen to fit well together ‘by accident’ is not documented.

The Phoenix can be distinguished just above the very centre of the mandala in a stylised version with its head pointing to the right, its tail feathers to the left, and one wing straight downward. This symbolises the “transformative cycle of death and rebirth,” referring to the possibility of change and co-creation personally, relationally and environmentally (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 5), which compares to the traditional meaning of the Phoenix as “a universal symbol of resurrection and immortality, of death and rebirth” as it dies through fire and then rises again from its ashes (Cooper, 1978: 129). Philosopher Gaston Bachelard, who devoted a whole book to this mythic creature, called the Phoenix “the symbol of living eternity” (Bachelard, 1990: 50) and “the renewal of an absolute beginning” (ibid.: 63). That the Phoenix sets itself on fire through the friction caused by its beating wings can be read as “metaphor for breathing fire into life” (ibid.: 40). Bachelard distinguishes “two sources of heat, the nest and the sun,” considering the former as feminine which cradles and puts to sleep, and the latter as masculine which arouses and awakens. Their combination is another “hermaphroditism of great images” (ibid.: 62-3). As such, the Phoenix is capable of embodying both yin and yang qualities and so signifies “the perfect interplay of the two powers or ‘essences’ in unity” (Cooper, 1978: 196-7). Cirlot adds to this that in alchemy the Phoenix refers to regeneration of life and “successful completion of a process” (Cirlot, 1971: 57). The triumph of eternal life over death is emphasised by Bachelard, Cirlot and Cooper (Bachelard, 1990; Cirlot, 1971: 253-4; Cooper, 1978: 129).

The image of the Phoenix refers to concepts of transformation and rebirth, which feature in many of the experiences of *Movement Medicine* participants. Jung described five forms of rebirth, of which one in particular is of interest with regard to this study, called ‘*renovatio*’. This metaphorical renewal or improvement during an individual’s life, suggests not a change of personality in its essential nature, but parts of the personality or its functions that are “subjected to healing, strengthening, or improvement” (Jung, 1971 [1959]: 114). ‘Transformation’ can be

seen as a part of a healing process, a particular moment in time, compared to the moment that “cocoon opens and the butterfly opens its wings,” (Ya’Acov Darling Khan, interview 23.06.11) although there can be many moments of transformation one after another in the human experience. A term that *Movement Medicine* participants often use in the same sentence as ‘transformation’ is ‘empowerment’. Ya’Acov Darling Khan considers this firstly as a *stage* in which empowerment happens, and then a *place* where an individual might be recognised as empowered. For him this means becoming strong enough to surrender, strong enough to go on learning, strong enough “to be able to be in relationship with life and to be able to work in relationship with the Great Choreographer, or with the Great Spirit, which means to be able to surrender one’s life” with both humility and strength (interview 23.06.11).

The imagery of the centre of the mandala functions both as point of departure and point of return. All things emerge from it, revolve around it and return to it (Cooper, 1978: 32). This happens in two complementary movements. The outward movement from the centre to the circumference, compares to “the journey into manifestation and multiplicity,” while the inward movement draws this “multiplicity back to unity, to harmony, knowledge and illumination” (ibid.: 32). This unity takes place both with one’s own spiritual centre as well as possibly with(in) ‘the great mystery’. Jung described the aspects of the personality, the psyche and the self, in terms very similar to the mandala. The centre of personality (and of the mandala we might add) represents the point in the psyche:

to which everything is related, by which everything is arranged, and which is itself a source of energy. The energy of the central point is manifested in the almost irresistible compulsion and urge to *become what one is*, just as every organism is driven to assume the form that is characteristic of its nature, no matter what the circumstances. This centre is not felt or thought of as the ego but, if one may so express it, as the *self*. Although the centre is represented by an innermost point, it is surrounded by a periphery containing everything that belongs to the self—the paired opposites that make up the total personality. This totality comprises consciousness first of all, then the personal unconscious, and finally an indefinitely large segment of the collective unconscious whose archetypes are common to all mankind” (Jung, 1971 [1959]: 357, italics in original).

The interaction between being and becoming is considered as “the basis of Movement Medicine” (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: xvii), and the aspects Jung described are recognisable in the underlying assumptions, the mandala and the experiences of participants. That makes *Movement Medicine* closely related to Jung’s work on the natural patterns in which human lives play out and evolve, which are all already contained in the centre of the central symbol, the mandala.

### 2.2.2 ‘The 4 Elements’

Moving outward from the centre to the rim of the mandala, we see four sets of three parallel lines around the circumference. These represent the four elements, Earth, Fire, Water and Air. The longest line in the middle of each trio symbolises the element, and two shorter lines on either side of it represent its yin and yang qualities or manifestations (field notes 19.01.10). The elements are related to the four cardinal directions as is common in shamanic medicine wheels, although different traditions place the elements in different positions. In the case of *Movement Medicine*, Earth is represented at the bottom of the mandala, ‘in the South’, Fire on the right side, ‘in the East’, Water on the left, ‘in the West’, and Air on top ‘in the North’ (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 22).

The elements are seen both as ‘physical presences’ existing inside and outside of everyone, and as “metaphorical language for describing some of the different qualities of being human” (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 21). With regard to the elements existing *inside* the human body, the Darling Khans refer to bodily facts or processes. They draw for example a parallel between Fire and the process of mitochondrial combustion, where the glucose at cell level releases energy for the processes in the body, or draw attention to the percentage of fluids in the body ranging from 45-75 % (ibid.: 52-3). As for the elements existing *outside* the body, references are made to natural processes such as photosynthesis (ibid.: 39-40), pollution of water and air (ibid.: 63), and evolution, stating that “the first life on Earth evolved in the primal soup of the waters” (ibid.: 52).

In addition to being aspects of the physical world, the elements are also considered as ‘fields of energy’, which provide an opportunity to explore a wide

range of different movement qualities, and a rich and varied language of metaphors which support the movement practice and helps people to experience their connection with the natural world. Exercises invite participants to regard the elements as teachers or ‘allies’ who “provide teachings to which each of us has direct access” (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 21). People are also encouraged to find their personal ‘spirit’, ‘guardian’ or ‘archetype’ of each element (ibid.: 22, 35). As the elements form the basic structure of the practice and are considered as part of the *Movement Medicine* ‘toolkit’ (ibid.: 75), I will now describe each one in more detail.

The element Earth refers to the planet earth, to the physical body, to ‘roots’ which are considered as a “source of strength and interconnectedness” and to ‘the Great Mother’ (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 28-30). It is in Earth that the Tree of Life roots, which is why in the *Movement Medicine* mandala this element is placed in the South. In the dance people are asked to pay attention to their physical bodies, letting the ‘earth of the body’ meet ‘the body of the earth’ (field notes 06.09.10). Cooper summarises the symbolism of ‘the Earth Mother’ as “the universal archetype of fecundity, inexhaustible creativity and sustenance” and refers to Amerindian traditions in which the “Earth Lodge is an omphalos, a cosmic centre” (Cooper, 1978: 59).

The Darling Khans describe Fire as “vital for our wellbeing” since it provides “warmth and light, comfort and protection” (2009: 39). In the dance, people are encouraged to feel the Fire inside and outside of them, usually by connecting to the sun. This element is therefore represented in the East, considered the place of the rising Sun. “Starting the car, cooking our food and hearing the central heating firing up” are mentioned as concrete examples for our relationship with fire in daily life (ibid.: 45). On a symbolic level, Fire is seen as transformative energy that “helps us to burn through what we no longer need” (ibid.: 39). This compares to the symbolism of the Phoenix, and also to alchemical beliefs which regarded fire as “the agent of transmutation” (Cirlot, 1971: 105). Fire is seen as a “mediator between forms which vanish and forms in creation” (ibid.), which corresponds to the concept of ‘firepower’ used in *Movement Medicine*. Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan observe a cultural ‘addiction’ to firepower, an

“insatiable ever-growing appetite of humans [which] is consuming the world” (2009: 41). Recognising it and digesting the charged aspects of Fire through the dance, ‘firepower’ can be used responsibly and creatively, relating to manifesting, intention, focus and direction. An exercise that brings together these first two elements Earth and Fire is called ‘Acceptance and Intention’. Participants are asked to hold their two hands up in front of them. In the one hand, they visualise acceptance of a certain state or situation, in the other the intention of working with it, working towards a certain goal or outcome. They ask themselves what is needed to bring these two in balance, and ask the Earth and the Fire to support them in that (field notes 12.07.09).

Working with the element of Water, the different forms and consistencies in which water appears are emphasised, such as rivers, lakes, oceans, raindrops and icebergs, which reflects an expression of the shamanic concept of shape-shifting (see §3.1.5). As such this element can be a mirror for being true to oneself in the many different shapes of human expression (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 57). This compares to Jung, who regarded looking into the mirror of water with a test of inner courage in which we meet ourselves and who saw water as the most common symbol for the unconscious (Jung, 1971 [1959]: 18-20). In *Movement Medicine*, Water is furthermore associated with cleansing, letting go and possible grief that may come up through those processes. The element is placed on the left side in the mandala, reflecting the geographic position of the Atlantic Ocean, West of Britain. Dancing with this element, people are often invited to stand in a large circle that represents a ‘cauldron of change and transformation’. The dancers on the outside represent the outline of the ‘cauldron’. At any given time people can go into the circle and dance to let go those things that are ready to be released. The adage is often “the stronger the circle, the more you can let go; the more you can let go, the stronger the circle” (field notes 22.03.07), emphasising that this is (like most shamanic healing work) a collective endeavour. Cirlot observes that “the respective symbolisms of the cauldron and of water have coalesced, and that they both relate to the general symbolism of water, which is the vehicle of life and medial element *par excellence* (Cirlot, 1971: 39-40). Water as vehicle of life is also acknowledged in *Movement Medicine* in the process called ‘Fusion’, linked to



sexual or creative energy. Finally, Water is a symbol for ‘connection’ as it connects all continents on the planet, all parts of the body, and also the present with the past through evolution. The Darling Khans translate the mundane act of turning on the tap as a connecting with the past, as the water that comes out of the tap has existed in different shapes such as raindrops or rivers before (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 53-8).

The fourth element, Air or Wind, is the “fastest and most pervasive” of all (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 62). Connecting to the element is most obvious through the breath and possibly the wind outside the dance hall. Through the Latin *spirare*, which means ‘to breathe’, a relationship is made to ‘spirit’ and inspiration. While it usually cannot be seen, living beings are dependent on it for life and, like water, air is a “prime connector” (ibid.: 63). Cirlot relates Air to three ideas: “The creative breath of life, and, hence, speech; the stormy wind, connected in many mythologies with the idea of creation; and, finally, space as a medium for movement and for the emergence of life-processes. Light, flight, lightness, as well as scent and smell, are all related to the general symbolism of air” (Cirlot, 1971: 6). This can be recognised in one of *Movement Medicine’s* exercises to engage with the Air element:

With this feeling of light airy space inside your body, you can consciously make room for new information from the blueprint of the soul. It’s as if you’ve cleaned out a room for a guest, opened the windows, let in the light and the fresh air, and now you are ready to invite more of *yourself* in. The soul returns as light to the body, so call the light and let the dancer in you decode the messages contained in the light as movement (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 70).

Air then can be seen as an element of spaciousness, connection, creativity, dreaming, visioning, and overview.

There is a specific exercise called ‘The Four Chambers of the Heart’ which links together the elements, emotions, and animal ‘guardians’. The guardian in the first ‘Chamber of Courage or Awakening’ is the Deer, related to the Earth. The ‘Chamber of Integrity’ is linked to the Jaguar, related to Fire. The third ‘Chamber of Surrender’ is the domain of Salmon in Water, while Humming Bird or the

Dragonfly guide the fourth and last ‘Chamber of Joy and Gratitude’ (field notes 04.03.09). In each Chamber, working with a specific emotional spectrum, the guardian can be asked for help or wisdom. To give an impression how the elements, the animals and the emotions can be related, I include an excerpt from my dance diary:

In the first chamber experiencing fear, alertness, swiftness, readiness to run away from danger, I connected to frozen bits and that bit of my heart that feels unloved. I danced the frozenness and let it melt, calling on the spirit of the Deer. I cried and released some of it. I would have liked to ‘linger’ here a bit longer, but on we went to Jaguar’s domain. Suppleness and strength. The warrior. Fiery dance with [fellow dancer], looking each other in the eyes and protecting our own ground, while encouraging the other to dance this dance and honour it. I could make the link between not loving my own truth enough to stand up for myself, my own boundaries, and the earlier dance of feeling unloved and frozen. If I don’t respect my own truth enough to act on it, in a way I give myself away for the needs or truths of others, trashing my own, because I don’t want to hurt people. This hurts myself, and freezes me. Third chamber of Salmon, surrounded by nine hazel trees in the sacred pond. Swimming up stream, sadness and sorrows. No particular feelings came up, but I had a beautiful tender dance with [fellow dancer], like a ‘moving sculpture’. Spacious. In the Chamber of Gratitude, I connected with Dragon Fly. A word was written in my hand: Trust. Now as a companion much more than a far away goal. Nice change, and a good reminder of all the other steps on the journey that this word was given to me (field notes 02.04.09).

Where Earth is described as feminine (‘she’ and ‘the Divine Feminine’ and Mother Earth, Fire is referred to as (‘the Divine) masculine’ or ‘Grandfather Fire’ (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 29, 39, 44). Water and Air are not further gender specified. Although elemental gender differentiations are not the same in every culture, these correspond to the gender differentiations as described by Cooper (1978). However, the Darling Khans urge people to not get “sidetracked by concerns about the gender of the elements” but to find their own language and relationship with each of them (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 39).

### 2.2.3 *‘The 5 Dimensions of Awareness’*

The five circles below the centre represent ‘The 5 Dimensions of Awareness’. Although these are not explained in detail in the first book (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009), they are an important part of the cosmology and the concrete dance practice. I therefore refer to descriptions of this on the ‘School of Movement Medicine’ website and in my field notes. ‘The 5 Dimensions of Awareness’ distinguish different areas of relationship with Self, Other, Community and Nature, Ancestors and the Spirit World, and with the Divine. Each participant may experience certain dimensions of relationship as easier or more challenging than others. It is suggested that competence in all five dimensions and flexibility to easily “move between them” are supportive of being “a fully resourced and potent human being.”<sup>52</sup>

The first dimension concerns the relationship with Self, in which self-respect, self-love and self-care are important keys. This includes knowledge and acknowledgement of one’s personal needs and awareness of the individual, inner landscape that the self is encouraged to honour. The second dimension is essentially about relationship with others, and about practicing clear communication, expression, and ‘active listening’. On the dance floor one can discover one’s own dance (literally and figuratively) whilst at the same time connecting with others. The next dimension includes nature, community and local, national and global environments. It acknowledges a connection with all living beings and a “sense of family” that extends to include the natural world. This includes the realisation that each personal dance is part of the creation of the bigger dance of life.<sup>53</sup> The fourth, ‘ancestral’ dimension invites a connection with the past, and offers possibilities for working with ancestors. This has two objectives. On the one hand this contact is focussed on learning from and honouring the ancestors, while on the other hand it provides an opportunity to discover and/or unravel “unresolved ancestral stories” in order “to release what no longer serves”. An awareness of the consequences of individual actions for future generations takes

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.schoolofmovementmedicine.com/dimensions-of-awareness.php>, accessed November 3, 2009.

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.schoolofmovementmedicine.com/environmental-dimension.php>, accessed November 3, 2009.

this dimension into the future as well. Besides ancestors, this dimension also includes spirit and the spirit world. The fifth and last dimension of awareness invites an exploration of the mysterious aspects of life, supporting the idea that each person carries some of god or spirit within himself or herself. There is an invitation that life can be seen as a continuous prayer and expression of one's 'deepest purpose'.<sup>54</sup>

On the dance floor, these five dimensions get individual attention in different exercises or workshops. Introspective dancing or writing exercises work with the dimension of Self. Partner exercises focus on the second dimension of relationship to Other. The third dimension is addressed by the very nature of doing this work in groups, specific group exercises and exercises out in nature. The dimensions of Ancestors, Spirit World and the Divine are present in the energetic set up of workshop spaces and in specific workshops that address these aspects. Workshop such as 'Arc of Time' and 'From Darkness to Light' specifically address ancestral patterns and lineages, and 'Rock my Soul' and 'The Long Dance' workshops work with prayer and the divine.<sup>55</sup> A very concrete expression of the work with the different dimensions is the 'M.E.S.A' exercise. This is short for the 'Movement Energetics of Spatial Awareness' and aims at contracting and expanding awareness, oscillating between an internal and external focus (field notes 01.04.09). This practice is described in greater detail in §4.8.2. Regardless of the theme of the workshop, dancers practice the fluidity of moving between these different dimensions.

#### **2.2.4 'The 9 Gateways'**

The final feature consists of the semi circle of nine small dots in the upper half of the mandala. They represent 'The 9 Gateways to Living the Dream', or in short 'The 9 Gateways'. Each gateway represents an aspect of life, from left to right: Body, Heart, Mind, Past, Present, Future, Fulfilment, Interconnection and

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<sup>54</sup> <http://www.schoolofmovementmedicine.com/divine-dimension.php>, accessed November 3, 2009.

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.schoolofmovementmedicine.com/>, accessed January 15, 2012.

Realization.<sup>56</sup> As with ‘The 5 Dimensions of Awareness’ it is recognised that for each practitioner some of these gateways may be more strongly developed than others (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 76-7). ‘The 9 Gateways’ are grouped into three ‘journeys’ of three gateways each. Each ‘journey’ also has a spatial orientation, which gives a sense of direction and connection.

The first journey connects the first three gateways of Body, Heart and Mind, and is called ‘The Journey of Empowerment’. This aims at “the alignment of body, heart and mind that creates the presence, self-acceptance and personal power from which strong intention emerges” (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 78). This journey represents a vertical line or axis, from the ‘roots’ and earth down below, up through the heart, and through the mind towards the sky, and down again. The basic practices that focus on these three gateways are coming into the body through the dance, connecting to the heart through for example the exercise called ‘The Four Chambers of the Heart’ described above, but also an encouragement and practice to speak from the heart, and investigating the patterns of the mind that create certain behaviour.

The next journey, called ‘The Journey of Responsibility’ explores the second set of three gateways, which are Past, Present and Future. This is presented as “an invitation to come into conscious relationship with what has gone before, what is happening now and what will come in the future” (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 78), based on the assumption that “honouring the past and taking full responsibility for your life in the present will help you to envision and co-create the future” (ibid.: 78-9). This journey can be experienced as an axis through time, running horizontally through the body, visualising the past behind, the present in the centre of the body, and the future in front (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 79).

‘Living the Dream’, the third journey,<sup>57</sup> combines the last three gateways of Fulfilment, Interconnection and Realization, and focuses on respectively “bringing the gifts you have into full manifestation,” experiencing “interconnection of all

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<sup>56</sup> Originally each of the nine circles “contained a symbol of one of the world’s mainstream religions” (Ya’Acov Darling Khan, newsletter 04.08).

<sup>57</sup> Previously also called ‘The Journey of Realisation’ or ‘The Journey of Fulfilment’ <http://www.schoolofmovementmedicine.com/embodiment-love.php>, accessed November 3, 2009.

life” and realising one’s “true nature as a manifestation of Divine Love” (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 79). This is represented by a “lateral and ultimately circular or spherical axis,” which aims to integrate personal fulfilment, connection to “the wider circle” which includes everything and thus leads to a realisation of oneness with all of existence (ibid.). The ‘Apprenticeship Programme’ ongoing group, taught by both Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan, works with these last three gateways, encouraging people to create their lives in such way that they become supportive of and integrated with personality, talents and interests.

### ***2.2.5 Translation of the Mandala to Workshops***

The workshops vary from two-day ‘weekend workshops’ (sometimes preceded by an evening class), ‘intensives’, ranging from three to ten days, and ‘ongoing groups’.<sup>58</sup> The latter consist of a sequence of three or four ‘modules’ of five to ten days, whereby people are required to commit to all modules.<sup>59</sup> Workshops generally focus on one or several parts of the mandala, giving a direction to the particular theme that will be worked with. Many weekend workshops and intensives for example are designed with a focus on ‘The 5 Dimensions of Awareness’ as described above. These include for example ‘For all our Relations’ which, through sponsorship and danced prayers, includes all five dimensions, and a workshop for couples called ‘The Space Between Us’, which focuses on the intimate love relationship as particular form of the relationship between self and other in the first two dimensions of awareness. Other workshops for example focus on yin and yang (‘The Circle and the Sword’), on emotions (‘E-Motion’), on coming to terms with and deriving strength from the past (‘S.E.E.R. Process’ and

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<sup>58</sup> A series of five Wednesday evenings called ‘MOVE’ were offered twice a year in Devon in 2007 and 2008, and now occasionally as separate evening class before ‘weekend workshops’ elsewhere. Since 2011 there is a 90-minute monthly ‘webinar’ or online seminar taught by Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan, which can be accessed from anywhere in the world through the use of internet. The aim is to “bring the dance back home” and to connect with other dancers and create a sense of community from one’s own home:

<http://www.schoolofmovementmedicine.com/webinars.php>, accessed March 9, 2012.

<sup>59</sup> Since 2009 ‘Ritual’ forms an exception to this, as these modules can be taken separately. See: <http://schoolofmovementmedicine.com/>, accessed October 12, 2009.

‘Phoenix Retreat’) and on ancestral patterns and lineages (‘Arc of Time’ and ‘From Darkness to Light’).

The curriculum furthermore contains three ‘ongoing groups’, designed around the three journeys through the gateways as described above. Susannah Darling Khan’s ongoing group ‘The Journey of Empowerment’ covers the journey of the first three gateways. The three five-seven day modules focus on the body, the heart and the mind. Ya’Acov Darling Khan’s ‘Ritual’, a sequence of three modules that can be taken separately or as a whole, covers the second set of three gateways of past, present and future in ‘The Journey of Responsibility’. These modules provide a space to retrieve energy from past experiences, envisioning the future through a solitary ‘vision quest’ of 48-hours out in nature while fasting, and working with mortality and death through a burial ceremony, in which participants spend a night buried in a grave that they dug themselves (Ya’Acov Darling Khan, *Flyer Ritual* 2009). Lastly, the ‘Apprenticeship Programme’ is an ongoing group designed to work with the third ‘Journey of Living the Dream’, through the last three gateways, Fulfilment, Interconnection and Realization. These last three gateways are more prosaic than the others, leaving some of the ‘Teacher Training’ apprentices with an ambiguous or unclear understanding of their meaning and the differences between them (field notes 05.07.11). Although the meaning of ‘Interconnection’ seems clearly understood, the difference between ‘Fulfilment’ and ‘Realization’ seems to be a matter of personal interpretation. To me ‘Fulfilment’ indicates whether a person is ‘on track’, living life in a manner that is personally fulfilling to them, doing things that nourish them, and having created for example at home or at work a situation that is nourishing to them. I understand ‘Realization’ more in terms of a ‘peak experience’, a sudden awareness of the nature of the universe, the patterns behind things and the connection between everything. Whether we call this ‘god’, or ‘oneness’ or ‘nirvana’ depends on background and personal vocabulary. This experience can last a split second, then may disappear, but will likely continue to be remembered and inform life choices made afterwards.

How participants engage with the mandala and its maps depends firstly on the type of workshop. In weekend workshops the mandala is present in the space,

without much verbal explanation about it. In intensive workshops, the relevant parts of the mandala will be explained verbally, to describe the ‘territory’ that will be covered in that particular workshop. Later on, during concrete exercises, the teacher may refer back to this, saying for example “we are now working with the first three dimensions.” Secondly, it is dependent on individual participants how they choose to engage with it. Some will use the maps at home to consciously work with these aspects. One teacher trainee for example, Margaret Davies, translated the different aspects of the mandala to her work as service manager for a fostering service, using it both with clients and colleagues (personal communication 16.01.12).

It is interesting that several strong parts of *Movement Medicine* and of the workshops are seemingly not reflected in the mandala: the dance itself, the ceremonial approach to things, and voice exercises and singing. Susannah Darling Khan calls those aspects ‘modalities’ or ‘vehicles’ of the work (interview 28.01.10). She says about this:

It’s not anywhere [in the mandala] because it’s everywhere. The way we see it, life is a dance, life is a song.... We’re dancing all the time, we’re just not conscious of it, even now I’m sitting, my heart is dancing, my limbs are twitching, my fingers are dancing. There is another level of engagement when I get up and start dancing around the room, but yeah. The prime dance, the essential dance between yin and yang, between receptive and active, breathing in and breathing out, that’s the universal dance. And I think that’s a reflection of the level, like you were saying that the integration is a life path, and dancing and singing are the prime modalities or vehicles so far, but it’s possible that someone could teach *Movement Medicine* in a completely different way, with poetry as the vehicle for instance as a development of consciousness in action. Or just as a meditation on life, you could do a life audit that would be really helpful, without dancing, that would still give someone a really clear sense of where they are in life and what their next steps are (Susannah Darling Khan, interview 28.01.10).

That underlines the mandala as a symbol for work that supports the process of ‘being and becoming’, while it leaves open the means by which that is achieved. That ‘apprentice teachers’ are now taking the approach elsewhere, including to situations where dance is not included such as with teenage delinquents, shows that



the underlying message can be sustained without dance. The concept of ‘movement’ in the name of the practice refers, as we will see below, not just to the physical act of moving, but also to finding balance in life.

## 2.3 The ‘School of Movement Medicine’

### 2.3.1 *Away from the 5Rhythms™*

*Movement Medicine* slowly ‘emerged’ over the years (Ya’Acov Darling Khan, newsletter 12.11) when the Darling Khans co-directed the European *5Rhythms™* Moving Centre School. Initially, their ideas remained very much ‘fused’ with the *5Rhythms™* practice. By 2006 it became apparent that *Movement Medicine* was evolving into something quite different from the *5Rhythms™*. During a staff meeting with the core faculty in Summer 2006, Gabrielle Roth, Robert Ansell, Jonathan Horan, Andrea Juhan, Kathy Altman, Lori Saltzman and the Darling Khans, looked at ways to take the next steps together, inclusive of both *5Rhythms™* and *Movement Medicine*.<sup>60</sup> Realising that this was not leading to any results, Roth suggested that the Darling Khans would go their own way with *Movement Medicine*, rather than trying to combine *5Rhythms™* and *Movement Medicine* as was the original intention. Also, where the Darling Khans had a feeling of natural timing to ‘leave home’ after an eighteen-year apprenticeship with Roth and within the *5Rhythms™* practice and aimed to further develop the *Movement Medicine*, Roth simultaneously felt the need to define and consolidate the *5Rhythms™* work (interview Susannah Darling Khan, 28.01.10, and newsletter 01.08). So the need arose for the two practices to separate.

Because the Darling Khans were part of the *5Rhythms™* core faculty, many of the structures and exercises they developed during this time, have become part of the *5Rhythms™*, as well as later remaining part of the newly developed *Movement Medicine* practice. In some ways it is therefore difficult to describe the

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<sup>60</sup> This is based on information from Susannah Darling Khan only (interview 28.01.10 and newsletter 01.08). Despite several attempts during my research, I have not been able to speak to Gabrielle Roth myself, who has passed away on 22.10.12.

differences between the two practices, as one evolved during the teaching of the other, and both are conscious movement practices that “emphasise the body as an essential part of a spiritual practice” (Susannah Darling Khan, talk Croydon Hall, 15.07.09).

In other ways, the differences are very distinct. For example, the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> invite a specific way of moving in each different rhythm, whereas *Movement Medicine* emphasises first and foremost being present in one’s movement, and trusting that the “dance naturally comes” (Susannah Darling Khan, talk Croydon Hall, 15.07.09). In this way, *Movement Medicine* honours the dynamic between introvert and extravert movement, in connection with the elements and the space around the dancer, whereas *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> has a tendency to emphasise the extravert. Also, *Movement Medicine* generally uses much slower music (see §4.6), and places less emphasis on ‘trance’ as is done in the Chaos rhythm. This might be a result of a different pace and life style in Europe and in America as well (interview Susannah Darling Khan, 17.04.07). Furthermore, the integration of unity and individuality seems more pronounced or distinct in *Movement Medicine*. Although *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> acknowledges the importance of community, the work seems more focussed on the individual, with community as a ‘by-product’ of sharing life with like-minded people off the dance floor. Finally, ‘The 9 Gateways’ and especially the inclusion of past, present and future are not part of the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> (Susannah Darling Khan, talk Croydon Hall, 15.07.09).

Gabrielle Roth asked for establishing a clear distinction between the two practices, for emphasising the differences rather than the similarities (interview Susannah Darling Khan, 28.01.10, and newsletter 01.08). This supported the Darling Khans to review what aspects were central to their work, and

take the [*5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup>] jacket off, and then finding this incredible [*Movement Medicine*] costume underneath. It was like pressing fast forward on the Darling Khan evolution button, on the radio or wherever. If we had had the luxury or the possibility of staying around, teaching ‘*5Rhythms-Movement Medicine*’, I assume a similar direction would have evolved but, well, who knows, much slower. (...). And the further we go on, the clearer it is that this is so different than *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup>.

(Susannah Darling Khan, interview 28.01.10)

By the end of 2006, the responsibilities of Ya'Acov and Susannah Darling Khan as co-directors of the European *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> Moving Centre School dissolved, and early 2007 the 'School of Movement Medicine' was created.<sup>61</sup> From that moment there has no longer been a central body representing *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> in Europe. As the Darling Khans were already well known and established as teachers, the actual organisational transition to 'School of Movement Medicine' appears to have just been a name change. A good organisational structure was already in place in Devon, and online through a website and a newsletter. They also had access to a large database of participants, an extensive list of venues and many 'organisers' all over Europe taking care of all the practicalities of workshops. The differentiation from the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> did not affect the way the 'School of Movement Medicine' was operated, nor did it affect specific features of *Movement Medicine* which were very similar to *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup>, or the way the practice was taught. However, although the initial separation felt harmonious, 'blessed' and full of energy, it later also led to certain tensions (Susannah Darling Khan, interview 28.01.10), both between Roth and the Darling Khans, but also between the Darling Khans, other *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> teachers and (former) students. Some people experienced loyalty problems after the split with *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup>, and felt they needed to choose between Roth and the Darling Khans, even though the latter have always encouraged people to integrate these two practices along side each other. In America, participants only have access to *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup>, as to date there are no *Movement Medicine* classes or workshops taught there. In Europe however, dancers can choose from a wide selection of *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> classes and workshops (both from European and American teachers) as well as a growing selection of *Movement Medicine* classes and workshops.<sup>62</sup>

At the end of the first 'Apprenticeship Programme' (2009-2011) and 'Teacher Training' (2011), three apprentices who had worked very closely with the Darling Khans over the years fully qualified as the first three 'new' '*Movement*

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<sup>61</sup> Haramati mistakenly suggests that the Darling Khans 'retired' in 2006, and does not acknowledge the creation of a new body of work (Haramati, 2008: 23).

<sup>62</sup> I have no information on whether the change from *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> to *Movement Medicine* led to competition between the two practices in the sense of "taking business or students away" from *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup>, or pressure on venue bookings.

*Medicine* teachers', alongside the founders of the practice. The other 39 apprentices qualified as '*Movement Medicine* apprentice teachers'. Many of them have now started teaching under supervision and will qualify in January 2013 or later, after fulfilling a series of additional assignments. The three who became fully qualified, Mark Boylan, Caroline Carey and Christian de Sousa, fulfilled a specific role as 'path finder' during the first 'Apprenticeship Programme' and 'Teacher Training'. Through their previous qualification and working experience as *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> teachers and close cooperation with Ya'Acov and Susannah Darling Khan, they could investigate what elements were necessary and crucial to train *Movement Medicine* teachers. At the time of writing this, these three are the only ones who are teaching both systems, each in their individual way.<sup>63</sup> This however may change, as some of the other 39 '*Movement Medicine* apprentice teachers' were also previously qualified as *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> teachers become fully qualified as *Movement Medicine* teachers, and combine both approaches in their work.

Both practices have an association for qualified teachers, and a system of ongoing education. For *Movement Medicine*, guidelines are being developed about what participants can expect from a teacher and a *Movement Medicine* space, which mostly concern ethical issues concerning safety and code of conduct. Although (apprentice) teachers are encouraged to find their own style, and also to combine it with other bodies of work that they are trained in, several aspects are generally part of any *Movement Medicine* space. These include specific exercises such as 'Awakening the Dancer', the four elements, yin and yang, the 'Tree of Life', 'M.E.S.A. practice', and other specific parts of the mandala, as well as characteristics of the space, which will be explained in detail in Chapter 4.

### **2.3.2 Marketing tools and advertising strategies**

The marketing tools and advertising strategies continued in similar fashion as before the changeover from 'Moving Centre School' to the 'School of Movement

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<sup>63</sup> See for example: <http://www.dancetherhythms.com/> (where Mark Boylan offers *Movement Medicine* workshops and Sarah Blagg offers *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> workshops), <http://www.dancingtao.net/home/index.php> and <http://www.alchemyinmovement.com> (the respective websites of Christian de Sousa and Caroline Carey, which both combine *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> and *Movement Medicine* as well as other practices). All accessed September 30, 2012.

Medicine'. According to Roland Wilkinson, the School's Administrator, the key marketing tools are 'online communications' such as the website, the newsletter, emails, subscription to Google and links with other websites, a Facebook page, and since autumn 2009 Twitter (Roland Wilkinson, personal communication 24.03.09 and 05.11.09). The website provides an introduction to and outline of *Movement Medicine*, including videos and podcasts, background descriptions of the workshops and calendar, the newsletter archive, testimonies, several social engagement topics relating for example to projects on sustainability, social justice, and the Sponsorship Fund, and finally practical items such as a 'travel board' for participants to make travel agreements, available coaching sessions and the shop.<sup>64</sup>

Although experience showed that advertising in magazines is no longer effective, the School continues to advertise in magazines such as 'Kindred Spirit' and 'Sacred Hoop'. The aim is twofold, both "to support these magazines and to have a 'presence' there" (Roland Wilkinson, personal communication 05.11.09). 'Kindred Spirit', appearing bi-monthly since 1987, covers subjects such as "spiritual growth, personal development, complementary therapies, travel, health," claiming to offer "a unique insight into the world of mind, body and spirit."<sup>65</sup> 'Sacred Hoop', founded in 1993 and appearing quarterly, focuses especially on "ancient sacred traditions of the world, in ways that are relevant and practical for people today."<sup>66</sup> The latter was originally established "to meet the needs of the then re-emerging shamanic community" and claims to continue to be "a key forum for networking sacred traditions worldwide."<sup>67</sup> It features topics on shamanic practice, ritual, dance, drumming, song and healing, including articles of or about current key thinkers such as Michael Harner, Jonathan Horwitz, Sandra Ingerman, Jamie Sams and Victor Sanchez. Some of these are also represented in 'Kindred Spirit', although this magazine focuses more on Eastern philosophy and meditation practices than 'Sacred Hoop' does.<sup>68</sup> Considering the assumptions and vision of *Movement Medicine*, these magazines provide a logical base for advertising. Both

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<sup>64</sup> <http://schoolofmovementmedicine.com/>, accessed October 12, 2009.

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.kindredspirit.co.uk/>, accessed January 4, 2010.

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.sacredhoop.org/>, accessed January 4, 2010.

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.sacredhoop.org/>, accessed January 4, 2010.

<sup>68</sup> <http://www.kindredspirit.co.uk/> and <http://www.sacredhoop.org/>, accessed January 4, 2010.

magazines are produced in England, which serves as a large client base for *Movement Medicine*.

Flyers are designed for each workshop, printed on recycled paper with natural inks.<sup>69</sup> Depending on various factors, the production of flyers costs between £250 and £500, including design (Roland Wilkinson, personal communication 05.11.09). These are sent out to “either all or selected parts” of the postal mailing list. A still significant number of people appreciate getting information through a postal mailing. As this is an expensive way of advertising, it has been reduced from addressing over 5,000 people to “just over 3,000 over the last few years” and this trend is anticipated to continue (ibid.). Furthermore, flyers are taken to workshops by the Darling Khans for display and distribution, and local organisers distribute them “as they think fit” (ibid.). Finally they are also available as PDF files on the ‘School of Movement Medicine’ website, which people can download according to their interest.

Some occasional market research done at particular workshops shows that people “come to a workshop for the first time usually (...) because of word of mouth recommendation but all the other methods have been shown to have some effect” (Roland Wilkinson, personal communication 05.11.09). The publicity quotes on flyers are derived from feedback forms after workshops.

### **2.3.3 Venues, Food and Holistic Presentation**

Courses can either be residential or non-residential, and over 25 venues are used across Europe to host the workshops (Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan, Programme of Events 2010), ranging from village halls, dance studios, gyms, or theatres, to fully equipped ‘conference centres’ that offer single, double and twin rooms, and dorms.<sup>70</sup> Four of these will be described here as examples of the

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<sup>69</sup> Graphic designer Rosie Perks from Strawberry Designs in Dartington is the regular designer for the ‘School of Movement Medicine’. She also created the website.

<sup>70</sup> The transition from the UK Moving Centre School that offered *5Rhythms*™ workshops to the ‘School of Movement Medicine’ has not significantly affected the network of venues and clients. *5Rhythms*™ is still offered in these centres (with the exception of *Rill Estate* which is becoming the home base of the ‘School of Movement Medicine’). There are many other European *5Rhythms*™ teachers and courses are well booked.

general atmosphere, facilities and characteristics: *Rill Estate*, Devon, *Earth Spirit Centre* and *Croydon Hall* both in Somerset, and *Bois le Comte* in Orval, Belgium.<sup>71</sup> These four centres are all of (very) high quality, on prime locations in or close to nature, catering for both corporate and ‘more holistic’ groups.<sup>72</sup> Three of these organisations explicitly advertise spaces for movement workshops, and the fourth one, the *Earth Spirit Centre*, suggests as much by mentioning a sound system in the main hall, showing a photograph of a spacious room. People running these venues seem to be inspired by a holistic, environmentally friendly ecological way of life, as for example at *Croydon Hall*: “We offer a nurturing, creative and sustaining environment that is at once friendly, welcoming, relaxing and meditative.”<sup>73</sup> All four venues provide some kind of Spa facilities such as a hot tub, sauna or swimming pool, and three of them have facilities for nature ceremonies such as sweat lodges or yurts, and an area for bonfires.

The quality and luxury of these venues play a significant role in the experience of a *Movement Medicine* workshop:

It’s very nice to drive off from work on Friday afternoon, and arrive somewhere where the food is delicious, where there is a certain level of luxury, where you can rest and come back to yourself, and where you don’t have to think about anything anymore (Anonymous, interview 12.01.09).

The practical setting contributes to creating a ritual space where transformation is invited to happen. In his book on Rave, Robyn Sylvan makes a similar observation, noting that the spatial dimension has an important effect in ritual events: “Ritual takes place in a controlled environment where everything is in its proper place and all activity unfolds in the correct sequence” (2005: 102). There is an exchange between the sacred and the profane which allows the ordinary to become “magical

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<sup>71</sup> <http://www.rillcentre.co.uk>, accessed October 8, 2009. Since then under new ownership, with a different website: <http://www.rillestate.co.uk/home>, accessed March 9, 2012.  
<http://www.earthspirit-centre.co.uk>, accessed October 8, 2009.  
<http://www.croydonhall.co.uk>, accessed October 8, 2009.  
<http://www.boislecomte.be>, accessed October 8, 2009.

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.rillcentre.co.uk>, accessed October 8, 2009.

<sup>73</sup> <http://www.croydonhall.co.uk>, accessed October 8, 2009.

places of wonder” (ibid.). This quality of the space will be addressed in Chapters 4 and 7 respectively.

Full residential *Movement Medicine* courses provide the participants with three meals a day.<sup>74</sup> The four centres each stress the quality and freshness of the food, which is vegetarian and largely organic, often locally sourced, whereas special diets such as vegan, wheat free, gluten free, and sugar free diets are available on request. Both the *Earth Spirit Centre* and *Bois le Comte* use vegetables, salads and herbs from their own organic gardens,<sup>75</sup> and *Croydon Hall* informs its customers that they do not use a microwave.<sup>76</sup> *Bois le Comte* mentions some regular dishes such as “crusty warm olive bread, fresh wild herb salad, Indian lentil curry, fennel soup with garlic croûtons, sushi, sea vegetable fritters, tofu quiche, spicy potato balls.”<sup>77</sup> Besides discussing mealtimes, the interaction between the teachers and cooks involves the type of ingredients used (such as sugar restrictions or preferred absence of pulses as they may cause flatulence), arranging a birthday cake for someone or skipping a meal and possibly having it prepared later when this supports the programme.

Participants’ opinions about the food vary. Some non-vegetarians struggle with the absence of meat and solve this in some cases by buying smoked fish to add to their meals. Others consider a residential course as a ‘cleansing’ for the body and intestines, as they acknowledge that they eat less ‘healthily’ or ‘cleanly’ at home, although they still may mention a craving for food with some more ‘substance’, such as sugar, or meat. On the other hand, for people who are used to simpler meals of for example plain rice and vegetables at home, the combinations of many different flavors and assortment of dishes can be experienced as ‘too rich’.

The teachers encourage participants to take good care of the body during the breaks and in life in general by giving the body healthy food, enough water, rest

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<sup>74</sup> During non-residential workshops in Devon a vegetarian/vegan organic lunch is made by Carrie Allcott who is the regular freelance cook for workshops in and around Totnes. In that case, participants arrange their own breakfasts and dinners. During other non-residential workshops, people may be asked to bring food to share for lunch, and again, breakfast and dinner are everyone’s own responsibility.

<sup>75</sup> <http://www.earthspirit-centre.co.uk> and <http://www.boislecomte.be>, both accessed October 8, 2009.

<sup>76</sup> <http://www.croydonhall.co.uk>, accessed October 8, 2009.

<sup>77</sup> <http://www.boislecomte.be>, accessed October 8, 2009.



and possibly food supplements, and finding supportive alternative (body) therapies such as massage, cranio-sacral therapy (both of which are available during most intensives) or acupuncture. Yoga may also be offered in the mornings. This combination of practices aims at consciously assisting the demands of body, mind and spirit, which is congruent both with *Movement Medicine's* intentional integration of these aspects, and with general New Age thinking (Prince & Riches, 2000: 106-10). As many people are already committed to a certain 'alternative' or 'non-mainstream' approach to life, the suggestions are unlikely to be unfamiliar to participants. However, nobody is required to subscribe to any features of this suggested holistic lifestyle, nor to any of the recommended additional practices. Personal choice and principles are acknowledged and respected as part of the process of empowerment and (re)claiming personal authority and therefore mostly encouraged rather than judged by both peers and teachers.

#### **2.3.4 Facts and Figures**

The 'School of Movement Medicine' is a business enterprise that pays the salaries of four people. The Darling Khans earn their living through the 'School of Movement Medicine'. Administrator Roland Wilkinson and his assistant Suzanne Fehr receive their salary through a percentage of the workshops costs. Furthermore, three staff members, Sue Kuhn, David Rose and Jo Hardy are paid for facilitating the 'Apprenticeship Programme' and 'Teacher Training', and also directly by the 'apprentice teachers' who remain in supervision with them. Since December 2011 there are three fully qualified teachers, Mark Boylan, Caroline Carey and Christian de Sousa, and 39 'apprentice teachers'. They (will) earn their own income through establishing their own network and are not paid through the School, although they can advertise their work through the School's website, using the mandala as logo.

The School created a Sponsorship Fund, which is now officially registered as charity,<sup>78</sup> for help with travel and accommodation costs for participants from areas of poverty and conflict, including third world countries. No tuition fees are

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<sup>78</sup> Charity Registration Number: 1124232,  
<http://schoolofmovementmedicine.com/sponsorship.php>, accessed January 6, 2012.

charged in these circumstances. Finally, a *Movement Medicine* Association is currently being set up as a body of advice to aid and represent teachers, maintain a register of qualified teachers and mediate any disputes that may arise (steering group, personal communication 27.03.12).<sup>79</sup> The *Movement Medicine* Association uses a differential fees system, where members are charged according to country, based on a system developed by IATIS (International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies).<sup>80</sup>

Up until March 2009, approximately 4,000 people participated in a *Movement Medicine* workshop, and around 12,000 people had worked with Ya'Acov and Susannah Darling Khan at some point.<sup>81</sup> 6,800 people receive the electronic newsletter per email. There is also a group page on the internet site 'Facebook', which in March 2009 during the 'set up phase' already counted 300 members and now has over 900 members (Roland Wilkinson, personal communication 24.03.09 and 19.01.12). Moving away from the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup>, the 'School of Movement Medicine' could already count on an enormous database and support of participants.

The percentage men/women in *Movement Medicine* workshops varies from 50-50 to 10-90, depending on the workshop, of course with the exception of strictly men or women only workshops, such as 'Wild at Heart' for men, and 'Sanctuary' for women. Juhan's comment regarding the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> seems to apply to *Movement Medicine* as well: "Women still dominate the numbers but there are many men in all the events. (...) I have come to the conclusion that men come because they feel welcome to come. It isn't overwhelmingly feminine in structure, even though the originator, Gabrielle Roth, and the majority of teachers are women" (Juhan, 2003: 141).

A weekend workshop generally costs between £125-165, five-day workshops vary between £325 for 'Awakening 2010' (including tuition and lunch), and £570 for, for example, 'Alchemy of Stillness 2009', based on tuition (£345) and food and accommodation (£225). Eight to ten-day workshops range from £795

<sup>79</sup> See also <http://movementmedicineassociation.org>.

<sup>80</sup> <http://www.iatis.org>, accessed December 4, 2012.

<sup>81</sup> These are the most recent figures currently available (Roland Wilkinson, personal communication 19.01.12).

including tuition and lunch for ‘Initiation 2009’ to £995 for the ‘Phoenix Retreat 2010’ including teaching, food and accommodation. Variation in price is largely due to costs of the venue and whether a workshop is residential or not, but also the currency of a country is taken into account when workshops are held outside of Great Britain. There is usually an ‘early bird discount’ of about 10-25% if people book before a certain date. Evening classes are rare, but usually cost £15.

The costs of the ‘Apprenticeship Programme 2009-2011’, the ongoing group that covers the last three Gateways and also prepared participants for the ‘Teacher Training 2011’, includes £3,625 for the absolute prerequisites at the time (one weekend workshop, the ongoing 3-module group ‘Journey of Empowerment’, ‘Initiation’, and the ‘Phoenix Retreat’), while an additional set of intensive workshops (such as ‘Awakening’ or modules from ‘Ritual’) are strongly recommended (extra £1,905-£2,730). The ‘Apprenticeship Programme’ itself (four modules of ten days) was budgeted at £7,000, covering teaching (£4,500), accommodation and food (£2,500). The ‘Teacher Training 2011’ (two ten-day modules) came to an additional £3,000. Doing the whole sequence from the necessary prerequisites, via the ‘Apprenticeship Programme’ to the ‘Teacher Training’ costs a total of £13,625 excluding travel expenses. Previous *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> experience is taken into account as fulfilling the prerequisites, so the courses do not all have to have been taken at the ‘School of Movement Medicine’. Because the ‘Apprenticeship Programme’ and ‘Teacher Training’ were offered for the first time, the costs were somewhat lower compared to the same sequence starting in 2012.

A comparable trajectory to become an accredited *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> teacher also costs roughly between £11,500 and £13,000, depending on the courses taken and subject to the dollar exchange rate. Although *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> does not include an apprenticeship, the prerequisites are more comprehensive and the teacher training consists of three rather than two ten-day modules. As this programme is based in the USA, additional travel expenses from Europe need to be taken into account for Europe-based participants. The *Biodanza* teacher training is structured in 30 weekends over three years and amounts to £4,830 (£1,610 for a year) for the course starting in 2009-2010. This fee excludes required weekly *Biodanza* group

participation throughout the training that has to be paid separately.<sup>82</sup> A comparison of three different UK schools for the *Alexander Technique*, all offering a three-year programme divided in nine consecutive terms show prices ranging from £12,150 (Oxford Alexander Training School, £1,350 per term),<sup>83</sup> to £13,500 (Alexander ReEducation Centre in Berkshire, £1,500 per term),<sup>84</sup> to £15,210 (Alexander Teacher Training School in London £1,690 per term).<sup>85</sup> The *Feldenkrais Method* training offered in San Fransisco over the course of four years with 40 days of training per year amounts to £10,250 (£2,560 per training year),<sup>86</sup> while the Feldenkrais International Training Centre in Sussex offers a three-year programme for £7,500.<sup>87</sup> These are all private institutions. However, a three-year MA degree in Dance Movement Psychotherapy at University of Roehampton, London, comes to £14,076 (£4,692 per year),<sup>88</sup> and a two-year fulltime MA Dance Movement Therapy at Goldsmiths, University of London costs £12,630, therefore falling roughly in the same range.<sup>89</sup> University of Roehampton's prices have dramatically increased with the new Higher Education fees (£23,100 for three years),<sup>90</sup> while Goldsmith seems to have become cheaper (£7,464 for two years).<sup>91</sup> The question arises whether these lead to similar accreditations, qualifications and job perspectives, but the investment is comparable. The Introductory Teacher Certification Programme (ITCP) of the *Skinner Releasing Technique* is a two-year commitment of six weeks for each of two summers. For the programme starting in 2010 a total of £4,200 was budgeted (£2,100 per year), excluding a fairly extensive list of prerequisites of prior courses to be taken.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>82</sup> <http://www.biodanza.us/S.F.SchoolofBiodanza.html>, accessed and converted to pounds from \$2,600 on January 5, 2010.

<sup>83</sup> <http://home.btconnect.com/sc1/OATSBrochure.html>, accessed January 4, 2010.

<sup>84</sup> <http://www.alexanderteachertraining.org/course.asp>, accessed January 4, 2010.

<sup>85</sup> <http://www.alexanderteacher.co.uk/term-dates.php>, accessed January 4, 2010.

<sup>86</sup> <http://www.feldnet.com/FELDENKRAISTrainingforTeachers/SanFrancisco/tabid/73/Default.aspx> accessed and converted to pounds on January 4, 2010.

<sup>87</sup> [http://www.feldenkrais-itc.com/?p=p\\_8&sName=Current-Training---Lewes-5](http://www.feldenkrais-itc.com/?p=p_8&sName=Current-Training---Lewes-5)

<sup>88</sup> <http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/postgraduate-courses/dance-movement-psychotherapy/index.html>, accessed January 4, 2010.

<sup>89</sup> <http://www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/registry/pdfs/pgfees.pdf>, accessed January 4, 2010.

<sup>90</sup> <http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/Finance/Postgraduate-Finance/>, accessed February 14, 2012.

<sup>91</sup> <http://www.gold.ac.uk/pg/fees-funding/>, accessed February 14, 2012.

<sup>92</sup> <http://www.skinnerreleasing.com/teachertraining.html>, accessed January 5, 2010.

These sums show that taking any of these trainings requires a considerable investment from participants. Although most *Movement Medicine* participants have been through higher education, they are often self-employed, with variable and irregular incomes. For many it is a struggle to get the funds together. Some take out loans to meet the payments as they feel that the call of their personal development and evolution is so strong that they do not have a choice but to do this. This shows a significant commitment and flexibility to meet the high costs. These issues are recognised by the School, and were a topic of discussion during the ‘Apprenticeship Programme’ and ‘Teacher Training’, where it was queried whether the high prices limit the accessibility and scope of *Movement Medicine* to an elite group of people, a question which would also apply for the other approaches with similar price ranges mentioned above. Although expenses are high, in the case of *Movement Medicine* they are justified through the quality of teaching, the integrity of the teachers and their strong commitment and motivation, the personal contact between teachers and participants, and receiving a body of teachings that, as the later chapters of this thesis will show, has the ability to help with creating sustainable change in one’s life.

### **2.3.5 Business Ethos**

Nature and the environment play an important role in *Movement Medicine*. This is reflected in the general business ethos, which is presented as inclusive, engaged, environmentally aware and interconnected. Especially ‘The 5 Dimensions of Awareness’ with its emphasis on community and nature seems to find strong expression in the way the ‘School of Movement Medicine’ is run. Awareness of sustainability and climate change issues is also reflected in *Movement Medicine’s* general business ethos on several levels. First of all concerning choices for sustainable advertising materials, recycling and composting lunch waste at workshops, sustainable travel (teachers using trains instead of airplanes as much as they can), and planting trees on a regular basis. Secondly, through the ‘School of Movement Medicine’ website and workshops, participants are actively encouraged to make sustainable choices as well, and are informed about political or

environmental awareness projects and films such as *The Age of Stupid* (Franny Armstrong, 2009) and *One Giant Leap* (Ben Cole, 2003-2005). Finally, as described above, effort is made to reach a wider public through websites such as *One World Mosaic* to inform people about climate change issues and to give voters a voice to address politicians.<sup>93</sup>

With regard to human resources, *Movement Medicine* emphasises community values and an attitude of (individual) attention, love and respect. The workshops are seen as ‘communities of support’ (Ya’Acov & Susannah Darling Khan, newsletter 01.07) and include notions of exchange, reciprocity, fundraising and social justice. This is also tangible in writing and communications to individuals and groups that often conclude with wishes of love, respect, and “happy dreaming or dancing” (compare the message in Rave culture according to Rill, 2006; Sylvan, 2005). This relates to the last three gateways of Fulfilment, Interconnection and Realization. Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan have managed to create a living by realising their personal dreams. This serves as an example for others, and many participants are inspired to make changes in their own lives when they see that something like this is possible (Anonymous, interview 12.01.09).

Although an experience of interconnectedness on the dance floor (individually or collective) may inspire a *feeling* of community and invite care and attention for planet and people, the work of establishing a long-term sustainable community takes more than that. The ‘School of Movement Medicine’ encourages this in several ways. During workshops, attention is often paid to general circumstances in the world, such as crucial elections (President Obama’s election in 2008), war zones (Libyan Revolution 2011), natural disasters (volcanic ash cloud Iceland 2010), and climate change conferences (Copenhagen 2009).

Some workshops (‘For all our Relations’, ‘The Summer Long Dance’) are designed specifically to raise money for charity, and in that sense contribute to the wellbeing of a larger network of people. Also, the practice of ‘Give-Aways’ (giving away products or services for free) is encouraged, and practiced by the

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<sup>93</sup> <http://oneworldgroup.org/oneclimate-community-mosaic>, accessed January 19, 2012.

School through organising these not for profit events. In these cases no teaching fee is asked, so people pay for costs to cover the organisation, food and accommodation only. At the 48-hour ‘Summer Long Dance’, each participant is asked to raise a minimum of £200. In 2010, 170 people attended, raising approximately £31,000 together. £8,000 went to a central charity picked by the School’s Apprentices, Survival International, which works in accordance with the aims of environmental awareness and social justice. The remaining amount went to charities of participants’ personal choices. The same event raised £23,000 for charities in 2011, and £35,225 in 2012.

Participants are furthermore encouraged to keep in touch with each other after workshops, and spaces for this are facilitated through several websites (‘School of Movement Medicine’, Facebook, Ning), which are used frequently.

### ***2.3.6 Participants and Emerging Community***

With its specific cosmology and business approach, the ‘School of Movement Medicine’ attracts certain types of ‘customers’. This section outlines the diversity of people who are drawn to working with this approach, what they hope to find and what they bring to *Movement Medicine*. In one way, *Movement Medicine* participants are a typical cross section of mostly European cultures. However, the considerable expenses for participating in workshops creates a threshold for people, resulting in a largely middle class, well educated, white ‘population’ of dancers. It would be safe to say that most of them have a commitment to self-actualisation and to living a meaningful life. Many participants also have a strong foundation in other spiritual practices such as Buddhism, Sufism or Shamanism. *Movement Medicine* aids their search for a deepening of self-discovery, meaning, connection, answers to philosophical questions and tools to live life skilfully. This includes help with “stress and difficulties,” social skills, and “stretching the psyche” by exposing oneself to new experiences. In interviews, participants regularly mentioned feelings of alienation of mainstream culture and a desire to ‘belong’. In *Movement Medicine* they find an experience of community, which is often underlined by using words such as ‘tribe’ and ‘family’. They also expressed a sense

of ‘missing’ something. This is very similar to the descriptions of participants in the Human Potential Movement and the New Age subcultures early 21<sup>st</sup> century (F. Buckland, 2002; R. Cohen & Rai, 2000; Greenwood, 2000; Jakobsen, 1999; Lowe, 1986; Pearson et al., 1998; Prince & Riches, 2000; Sutcliffe, 2003; Sylvan, 2005; Wallis, 2003; York, 1995).

Generally, we could say that participants represent the whole possible range of human experiences. It differs from person to person how strong the issues are that they might bring, what understanding they have gained about them, how much they have already ‘worked’ on it, and how ‘empowered’ they already are. It also varies from person to person if they have other coping mechanisms, strategies and activities in place outside the dance that help them deal with life’s events. This includes for example a supportive structure of family and friends, other spiritual or healing practices, pets or hobbies on one end of the spectrum. There are people who have no major ‘issues’ to work on, are generally ‘happy in their own skin’, or possibly have some issues caused for example by growing up in family situations that may not have been entirely harmonious or encouraging. Their motivation includes ‘following their intuition’ and ‘looking for their path’, finding stronger alignment, presence, focus, dedication, healing, empowerment, transformation, balance, and looking for integrating more harmony, joy and play in their lives. On the other end of the spectrum, there are also people who are dealing with very difficult issues, including experiences of abuse, trauma, loss, exhaustion, illness, disability, eating disorders, self-harm, depression, isolation and low self-esteem. That *Movement Medicine* can both be a fun practice in a good atmosphere, as well as a contribution to healing, or even a lifeline to recovery is not mutually exclusive.

Susannah Darling Khan (interview 28.01.10) mentions several different levels on which people are interested in *Movement Medicine*. Firstly a spiritual level, in which people long for a connection with the divine, or ‘the great mystery’, in a manner that “gives room for spirit to be acknowledged as part of our life.” Secondly, she observes a “longing for connection” as result from a symptomatic loneliness and, paraphrasing Van Jones, a “hunger in the human heart.” Through connections in virtual reality and as “passive consumer of other people’s lives on television” people miss out on participatory, ‘warm’ connection with equals.



Thirdly she sees a “longing to know oneself and to know each other as physical beings, as emotional beings, as thinking beings, and as spiritual beings, as creative beings and for those [aspects] not to be separate. (...) The longing to know oneself as a source of creation, not just as someone who just has to go along with things as they are, but to know oneself as an artist.” Fourthly, she observes the longing for community, “a longing for that unity within which we can each be more and more ourselves, and Gabrielle Roth’s concept of ‘the tribal individual’, which is really strong with us too: unity without conformity and individuality without separation” (Susannah Darling Khan, interview 28.01.10). These reasons show considerable overlap with Philip Cushman’s analysis of the ‘empty self’, discussed in the Introduction (1990). Ya’Acov Darling Khan echoes most of this and adds a few motivations (interview 23.06.11). According to him, people also come to *Movement Medicine* to look for place to relax, to experience their emotions fully and to ‘let go’. Some will come out of desperation because they have tried everything else, or boredom because they have a free weekend. Sometimes people have witnessed a tangible change “in their friends or partners and [want to] see if it has any benefit for them.” This can also include giving “their relationship a chance” in difficult times, when the partner is involved in *Movement Medicine*. Sometimes people even come to a workshop by mistake, thinking it would be another kind of event (Ya’Acov Darling Khan, interview 23.06.11).

There are of course people whom this type of free style dance and movement practice does not suit, but it proved difficult to find any to interview, because they generally do not tend to come back. Reasons may vary from not being particularly interested in movement; not being comfortable with expressing emotions through the body and movement; not being comfortable with the level of depth of personal inquiry; being disinterested in community; and criticising the proportion of dancing versus talking. Of course there are some contra-indications to dancing in general, or dancing *Movement Medicine* in particular as mentioned by both teachers and participants. These include people with unstable mental states or very deep unresolved trauma for whom the nature of the work may be too catalytic, and people in a physically weakened state for example with severe anorexia, for whom the physical exercise may be too exhausting (see also Hanna, 1988a).

Nevertheless, dance is generally associated with joy and considered supportive of wellbeing and personal growth.

Considering the number of people who have worked with Ya'Acov and Susannah combined with the focus on community building values and activities, I think it is not too early to speak of an emerging community of *Movement Medicine* participants or, in terms of the multimodal framework, an emerging cultural current (MSc). This does not require for individuals within the current to have the exact “same set of states”, nor “that the states form a relatively harmonious and mutually consistent set” (Samuel, 1990: 70). Assuming that states are changing all the time, includes some degree of conflict and tension within and between them (Samuel, 1990: 71). This is recognisable in the current phase of *Movement Medicine*, in which still a lot of things happen for the first time and need to be discovered in the process. However, the *Movement Medicine* cultural current (MSc) seems to be relatively harmonious and consistent by nature. Furthermore, although *Movement Medicine* shows characteristics of a social movement such as developing sustainable life styles, including spiritual values and cultivating a shared belief system, solidarity and a sense of belonging (compare R. Cohen & Rai, 2000: 3; Della Porta, 1999: 14), the relatively small scale and the absence of broad scale social momentum do not warrant the term ‘social movement’ in itself, although it can be seen as part of a larger social movement that emphasises alternative ways of looking at health and healing and introduces new forms of spirituality as described in the Introduction.

This chapter has introduced *Movement Medicine* as a practice, which enables us to place it in a wider framework, comparing its resources and concepts with traditions that have similar foundations.

### **Chapter 3: Internal Coherence of *Movement Medicine* and its Relationship to other Traditions**

In this chapter we will have a closer look at the underlying notions, beliefs and premises of *Movement Medicine*, whether these are internally coherent and how these relate to other currents such as the mainstream culture, the New Age, and especially to (neo-)shamanic traditions. According to Brian Morris, some critics consider ‘shamanism’ as a “made up, modern, western category,” which “does not exist as ‘unitary and homogeneous’ phenomenon” (2006: 14). Acknowledging the differences in shamanic practices worldwide, I believe it is still helpful and obvious to use this term, referring to “a complex set of beliefs, ritual practices, and social relationships that have worldwide occurrence” (Morris, 2006: 14). It has already been mentioned that shamanism is not the timeless and unchanging phenomenon it is sometimes presented as, but is itself continually changing in response to internal cultural processes and external influences. In some cultures it is discontinued, while others see a revival. Interesting is also its apparent adaptability to modern day (urban) contexts (Morris, 2006: 14).<sup>94</sup>

Firmly located in the Human Potential Movement and New Age, neo-shamanism is presented as a way of working with consciousness, with an emphasis on self-help and self-actualisation (Heelas, 1996: 89; Morris, 2006: 14). There are different terms for modern western ‘translations’ of shamanic practices and behaviour, such as ‘core’ shamanism, ‘neo-’, ‘post-modern’ or ‘new’ shamanism, ‘New Age’ and ‘urban’ shamanism, and ‘modern western’ shamanism. Being aware of the debate concerning the different meanings and connotations of these terms, for reasons of simplicity, I choose to use the terms ‘traditional’ and ‘neo-shamanism’ to contrast indigenous, non-western approaches and their translations

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<sup>94</sup> Jakobsen voices concerns of some North American Indians regarding the use of their traditions, tools and techniques by westerners, creating a ‘watered down’ version of their cultural identity. However, ‘universal core-shamanism’ cannot be seen as offending any cultural claims (Jakobsen, 1999: 213-4). For a discussion of the construction of a ‘Native American identity’ and the western commodification of indigenous concepts, see for example Aldred (2000), Black (2002) and Weaver (2004).

to ‘modern day’ western culture (from the 1960s onwards) (see for example Cox, 2007; Høst, 2001; Jakobsen, 1999; Morris, 2006; Wallis, 2003).<sup>95</sup>

### 3.1 Underlying Concepts and Resources

#### 3.1.1 *Nature, Interconnection and Technology*

One of the first premises of *Movement Medicine* is that “all life is sacred” (field notes 02.07.11). The practice aims to be supportive of all life on earth, as well as of individual lives of dancers. We have already seen that nature, the environment and interconnection play an important role in *Movement Medicine*, both in the maps of ‘The 5 Dimensions’ and in ‘The 9 Gateways’, and in the business ethos of the ‘School of Movement Medicine’. Although the workshops take place in dance studios and village halls, nature outside of the studio is usually acknowledged. Altars often include plants, a small tree or other natural objects. During some workshops there is a possibility of spending some time in nature during a ‘vision quest’ of a few hours or even a few days in the particular ‘Vision Quest’ workshop. This is a traditional shamanic tool for connecting to the universe and our connection with it through spending time alone in nature (McGaa, 1990).

Shamanism is traditionally part of nature based cosmologies and assumes an intrinsic interconnection between humans and their environment (Morris, 2006: 35). Both the New Age Movement and society at large seem to aspire to a reconnection with nature, sustainability and natural materials through emphasis on local and organic food awareness, the concept of ‘ecological footprint’ and notions of sustainability, as outlined in the Introduction. Nature as a concept has meant different things to different people over time (Greenwood, 2005: 39). Wouter Hanegraaff points out that New Age nature based religions generally affirm the harmonious, beautiful and benevolent sides of nature whereas the cruel side, death,

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<sup>95</sup> Annette Høst, one of the co-directors of the Scandinavian Center for Shamanic Studies, stresses that her work is first and foremost ‘shamanism’. More explicitly, she speaks of “Modern Western shamanism or even Modern European shamanism” as it “is rooted in and shaped by our own (modern) time and our North European culture, with its spiritual, material, political conditions and traits” (Høst, 2001).

destruction and decay receive very little attention (Hanegraaff, 1998: 22). This raises questions about the constructed image and interpretation of nature. Reconnection may not necessarily be a *return* to something, but reconnection with a (lost) *vision* of nature, or the creation of a new myth. Susan Greenwood mentions different ways to participate in and with nature (2005: 43-6), which paradoxically do not necessarily need to happen *in* nature, as it is about “the creation and establishment of connections and relationships with the environment” (Greenwood, 2005: 210). She also observes that contemporary nature religion is largely practiced by urban people.

Many authors call for a revaluing, a renegotiating of our relationship with the natural world (Sondra Fraleigh, 2000: 54; Shusterman, 2000: 162). The rising interest in shamanism especially in New Age circles, seems to Lemaire a symptom of a simmering desire in our modern society for a dimension which has been repressed (Lemaire, 2002: 160).<sup>96</sup> He speaks of a surprising return of the shaman, which reminds us of that which ‘cogito’ seemingly conquered: a concrete, physical communication with nature, no opposition between subject and object, between animism and a correspondence between micro and macrocosm (Lemaire, 2002: 161). Although he questions whether an integration of (neo-)shamanic elements in our culture is at all possible, he observes that it would however change our western self-consciousness to a great degree. People could once again feel part of the larger whole. After the recognition of the archaeology of consciousness by psychoanalysis, he suggests that shamanism could delve into an even deeper layer of this archaeology, for us to get in touch once again with our ancestral sensibility (Lemaire, 2002: 161). With others, Lemaire describes the irony of the shamans’ comeback. Not so long ago considered mainly as an ‘embodiment of obscurity,’ he is now welcomed as a ‘saviour of planet earth’ (Lemaire, 2002: 161; see also Morris, 2006: 36).

In *Movement Medicine*, electronic technology is used as a resource both to provide a certain experience on the dance floor through music (see §4.6) and for networking and advertising through twitter, Facebook, internet, and podcasts.

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<sup>96</sup> All references to Ton Lemaire (2002) are based on my personal translations from Dutch to English.

Although the use of modern technology may presently still be absent in traditional shamanic settings, within the ‘back-to-nature’ movement it is embraced and easily integrated (compare Greenwood, 2005: 205). Church institutions also recognise the need for reaching out to the community through modern means. Websites and ‘blogging pastors’,<sup>97</sup> the possibility of confession and discussing life issues with a priest via text messages, and the use of elaborate electronic systems in churches (Uhde, 2003) are but a few of the current ‘market’ strategies. As a conference of bishops recognised in 1999 that “this is becoming the preferred language of the new generation” and considered technology to have “the potential of effectively bringing about mutual knowledge, understanding, familiarity, appreciation, harmony and love throughout the human community.”<sup>98</sup> Also within the Rave culture, technology is intentionally used “to facilitate spiritual and religious experiences” (Sylvan, 2005: 106) and as such, when used with awareness, does not necessarily contradict the emphasis on nature.

### **3.1.2 Healing and Balance**

Another underlying premise of *Movement Medicine* is that people naturally orientate towards physical, emotional and mental health when they are “allowed to” (field notes 02.07.11). This assumption is also found in humanistic psychology, the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup>, Gestalt, psychology, natural medicine and shamanic practices, all of which have influenced the development of *Movement Medicine*. The focus of shamanic work concerns maintaining and/or restoring individual and community health and balance (Glass-Coffin, 2010: 207; Jakobsen, 1999: 1; Morris, 2006: 42; Sylvan, 2005: 149). Shamanic healing techniques are largely based on retrieving lost essence through soul retrieval and extracting harmful intrusions (Harner, 1980;

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<sup>97</sup> <http://www.churchtechreview.com/church-member-mgmt/churches-using-the-internet-to-be-on-mission-disciple-and-create-community/>, accessed November 2, 2009.

<sup>98</sup> Bishops’ Institute for Social Communication (BISCOM) II “Modern Communication Technologies: Challenges for the Church in Asia?” Bangkok, Thailand, 6-11 September 1999, retrieved from <http://www.fabc.org/offices/osc/docs/pdf/biscom2.pdf>, accessed November 2, 2009.

Horwitz, undated; Ingerman, 1991; Morris, 2006). In the trance state, the shaman receives information on the diagnosis and treatment.<sup>99</sup>

Already as early as 1948, the World Health Organization defined ‘health’ as “a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (W.H.O., 1998: 1). *Movement Medicine* largely subscribes to this definition, adding however a spiritual element, viewing health as a balance between physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of the human being. This is in agreement with alternative, holistic visions of health, which focus on maintaining or restoring balance between these aspects (Prince & Riches, 2000: 106). ‘Health’ and ‘healing’ can thus be considered as an integration of different aspects of an individual, but also as integration of different parts of life such as art, community, relationship and movement (D. Halprin, 2003: 231).<sup>100</sup> These concepts then become synonymous with an ongoing process of integration and balance, which includes personal growth. In *Movement Medicine* the processes of balance and evolution are considered as inherent to life, reflected in the concepts of yin and yang and the processes of being and becoming or, in other words, of self-regulating, homeostatic processes (field notes 02.07.11). This implies that, regardless of the absence of a physical disease or condition, a healing (i.e. balancing) process is always occurring in some form and would therefore apply to most people. Ya’Acov Darling Khan describes healing as finding a connection with or access to “the intelligence of life” inside an individual, which he recognises as healthy in itself (interview 23.06.11). It is “the intelligence that beats the heart and lives the body, and mends the cells and mends the cuts, and brings things into balance and moves towards health for the most part.” Healing then, is the process of recognising and accessing that part, and to give it more space by removing any

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<sup>99</sup> A shaman is by some considered as a ‘wounded healer’ (Halifax, 1982), as a shaman’s vocation is often initially revealed through illness (Eliade, 1972 [1951]). Therefore, the link between shamanism and psychopathology is not entirely surprising. Similarities between shamanic trance and for example psychosis, epilepsy or schizophrenia are observed (Grof & Grof, 1986; Walsh, 1993). Differences however, are the degree of control and choice that the shaman exercises over the trance state, and his skills to bring back information to the ordinary reality and interpret and translates the experience in a way that benefits the patient or the community (Grof & Grof, 1986; Jakobsen, 1999).

<sup>100</sup> The physical advantages of movement for improving health and the effects of the interaction between mind, heart, body and the brain through movement have been described elsewhere (see for example Hanna, 1988a).

obstacles that are in its way. It is seen as “the full allowing, development of, expression of, sharing of the total embodiment of your soul’s quality whilst you’re here, living in a body” (Ya’Acov Darling Khan, interview 23.06.11). This process can be catalytic and transformational.

Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan observe several conditions that may need healing. First of all, there are certain experiences that can create blocks in the human system. These blocks may cause inhibition, fears and may keep a person back from living their ‘full potential’ (Susannah Darling Khan, personal communication 16.06.08). Secondly, traumatic life experiences such as abuse, long term illness, miscarriage, combat or addiction may cause parts of the soul to leave. ‘Soul loss’ is a shamanic term for moments when part of the soul can become separated from the person “in order to survive the experience” (Ingerman, 1991: 11). This can lead to illness (Eliade, 1972 [1951]: 300-1, 327), and therefore, these parts need to be retrieved to secure or regain full health. Thirdly, there can be disconnection in epistemological sense between parts of the self, such as for example between body and mind. Fourthly, there can be disconnection between self, others, community and nature which may lead to fragmentation, isolation and loneliness (Ya’Acov Darling Khan, interview 23.06.11).

‘Healing’ in *Movement Medicine* is recognised as possibility in the dance, with some exercises specifically focussing on that. The *Movement Medicine* ‘toolkit’ includes processes through which participants can retrieve lost energy and soul parts (explained in §6.4), adapted after Carlos Castaneda’s technique of ‘recapitulation’ (Castaneda, 1981: 285-92; Sanchez, 1995: 73-84). However, the practice is not aimed at *teaching* these particular skills like in workshops on neo-shamanism where participants are often paired up practicing basic shamanic healings skills on each other. To my knowledge, although soul retrieval happens also in neo-shamanic workshops (revived by Sandra Ingerman in relation to Michael Harner’s ‘Foundation for Shamanic Studies’), the technique of recapitulation is, with some exceptions, generally not used in that context. Workshops from for example Jonathan Horwitz (‘Scandinavian Center for Shamanic Studies’) regularly include a collective healing ritual for one participant,



for example through a ‘spirit boat healing’, in which one participant receives the full attention of teacher and all other participants (compare Harner, 1980: 71).

For Susannah Darling Khan the dance provides and connects people to “a deep river of joy, a deep river of healthy wellness and celebration of life that means that there is the resource to go into the ‘shadow’ places without being overwhelmed by them” (interview 28.01.10). She compares her work as movement teacher to that of a psychotherapist. Both are working with the human condition and experience of suffering, separation and loss, feelings of inadequacy and traumas. However, according to her, the dance emphasises the resource of joy more than most therapies. Also, in their role of teachers, both Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan include healing as part of holding the space. When appropriate or necessary, with consent, they may help an individual participant going through their process, by using shamanic techniques.

Another issue that needs to be addressed in this context is that in *Movement Medicine* healing is not simply an individual matter, unlike the assumptions of western biomedicine and possibly even New Age that often hold the individual responsible for ill health (Prince & Riches, 2000: 106-10). One of the views of the practice is that “everyone’s happiness and suffering is connected to the state of the whole” (field notes 02.07.11). In shamanic traditions, the shaman may be working on one client specifically, but this personal healing is considered to benefit the wellbeing of the entire society (Winkelman, 2004a: 65; 2004b: 150). This inclusive view stretches the boundaries of consciousness and self, and values the support and reciprocity experienced in community. In *Movement Medicine* this is recognised, and the value of witnessing and supporting each other’s healing process is stressed repeatedly. Samuel (1990) describes how in shamanic cultures any imbalance is seen as influencing the individual, the society and even the cosmic order: “Within the non-dichotomizing language of the shamanic visionary state, there is no real distinction between them, and the mechanisms for restoring balance likewise are thought of as operating in all these spheres at once” (Samuel, 1990: 119, see also 87-9). During ceremonial dances such as ‘The Long Dance’, sometimes other shamans are invited, offering individual healing sessions during the ceremony.

These are often communal and public, rather than individual and private. As such, inclusion of the community is considered as a natural part of the healing process.

### 3.1.3 ‘Medicine’

In *Movement Medicine* there is a strong supposed link between movement and life, life being considered as the “creative, dynamic interplay between stability and change, limits and growth, awareness of what is and movement towards what can be” (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: xvii). This indicates movement between different parts of the individual psyche, and also a movement from present towards future. Movement in general, and the specific structure and exercises are offered as remedy or ‘medicine’ for the conditions described in the previous section, and is recognised as ‘catalytic’, “bringing up deep layers of the human condition” (field notes 02.07.11). Dance as a ‘medicine’, or medium for healing is also recognised by others. Daria Halprin uses a similar description of movement as medicine, helping people to “reenter their bodies and reconnect with their feelings” and tolerate an intense meeting of their story and suffering (D. Halprin, 2003: 29).<sup>101</sup>

‘Medicine’ is a concept frequently used in shamanic traditions. The words ‘medicine man’ and ‘shaman’ are often used as synonyms (Eliade, 1972 [1951]: 3), although a medicine man or woman who may work with herbs and herbal healing does not necessarily travel between the worlds to communicate with spirits (Chris Lüttichau, personal communication 22.12.11). The shaman works with concepts such as ‘medicine wheel’ or ‘medicine circle’ which function as ‘power place’ for ceremonial and healing work (Villoldo & Jendresen, 1995 [1990]), the ‘medicine

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<sup>101</sup> The link between the words ‘movement’ and ‘medicine’ is not unique. Rebecca Strong, founding director of ‘The Embodied Cosmology Project’, offers weekly dance classes called ‘Movement as Medicine’, also influenced by *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> (<http://www.movementasmedicine.com/>, accessed January 14, 2012). Until 2010 there also was another movement practice called ‘Movement Medicine’ offered by Hualani (birth name Janice Mark) that advocated conscious movement as a means of getting in touch with body and soul, however the website on which I accessed this originally has now expired (<http://www.innercurrencies.com/movement.html>, accessed January 26, 2010). There is no connection between either Strong or Hualani and the ‘School of Movement Medicine’ (Susannah Darling Khan, personal communication 02.05.11). Furthermore, there are at least two health care organisations operating under the names ‘Movement Medicine’ and ‘Panacea Movement Medicine’, which respective provide ‘health management services’ and ‘health solutions’ (<http://www.movementmedicine.com.au/> and <http://www.panaceamm.com/>, accessed January 26, 2010).

pouch' or 'bundle' containing magical power objects for protection, healing, empowerment and working with energies (Harner, 1980: 108-9; Stevens & Stevens, 1988: 294) and sometimes even 'medicine songs' (Harner, 1980: 53, 72-5).

Aside from movement as 'medicine' and establishing a personal 'medicine circle' in the dance, *Movement Medicine* participants are encouraged to find their own 'medicine', which is seen to be both a resource for themselves, as well as their gift to the world. This suggests that it works and exists both inwardly and outwardly (Ya'Acov Darling Khan, field notes 12.12.07 and interview 23.06.11). The 'medicine' can be tools in the form of objects, practices (including dancing), or qualities (such as humour) that are supportive to the person using them, and can actively be called upon (field notes 10.06.08).

Furthermore, 'medicine' can be found as a resource 'outside' of oneself, which manifests in several different ways. Firstly in nature, where most living things have been allowed to "grow in accordance with [their] own nature" and is therefore seen as a source of health and full expression. The examples of the ocean, a healthy tree or a mountain strengthen the internal life intelligence within the human being (Ya'Acov Darling Khan, interview 23.06.11). Secondly, the outside 'medicine' may be found in other human beings. Spending time with people "who have been along a similar [healing] journey" is thought to guide the natural intelligence of the individual system (ibid.). Thirdly, the outside 'medicine' can manifest "in spiritual form in terms of archetypal energies like the Wise Elder, or the elemental guardians" (ibid.). In Jung's book 'Psychology and Alchemy', we find some references to Dorn, a 16<sup>th</sup> century alchemist, who refers to a metaphysical substance concealed in the human body. This 'medicine' is "of threefold nature: metaphysical, physical, and moral" ('moral' is what nowadays would be called 'psychological') (Jung, 1993 [1953]: 269). Dorn describes truths "which cannot be seen with the outward eye, but [are] perceived by the mind alone" yet have the capacity to "work miracles" (*Speculativa philosophia, Theatr. chem.*, I, p. 298). Hans van Asseldonk in his work on Tao and Alchemy in agriculture (2010) describes 'medicine' or 'elixir' as the concentration of the divine spark in everything and therefore present in creation. The elixir concentrates the

divine in all these forms and as such strengthens the evolutionary process. This can only work when it is understood from the assignment to gather back all the dispersed elements of the original moment of creation, which is, according to van Asseldonk the essence of mystics' and alchemists' work (Asseldonk, 2010, part V: 119). In short, Ya'Acov Darling Khan sees the gathering one's 'medicine' as distilling a "healthy relationship with self, history, ancestry, the present moment, companions around us, the future, our role, our place in the circle, our gifts that we're here to develop, offer and pass on, our relationship with what gives us true fulfilment," and also "that which supports life to unfold in its natural way so that's not about removing obstacles, it's simply about supporting the health" (Ya'Acov Darling Khan, interview 23.06.11). This is related to the process of 'being and becoming' mentioned earlier with regard to the symbolism of 'the Centre'.

### ***3.1.4 Altered States of Consciousness***

Most spiritual traditions include tools that enable a practitioner to access different states of consciousness, visionary or transcendental states, for example for the purposes of gathering information, healing or otherwise connecting with non-material dimensions of life. The ecstatic journey or 'magical flight' is often seen as one of the defining and most important characteristics of shamanism (Eliade, 1972 [1951]: 8; Jakobsen, 1999: 5, 12), although identifying shamanism only with trance would diminish its social and cultural dimensions (Morris, 2006: 21). The shaman accesses the spirit world(s) at will, through techniques that create trance, ecstasy or altered states of consciousness. These states can be induced in different ways, including through rhythmic drumming, the use of hallucinogenic plants or fungi,<sup>102</sup> food- and sleep deprivation, isolation, and in some cases through exposure to extreme weather conditions, or physical pain (Morris, 2006: 20). Dancing or other

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<sup>102</sup> Making the translation from traditional shamanic traditions to western contexts, both Carlos Castaneda and Michael Harner cautioned against the use of hallucinogenics, emphasising drumming, dancing and chanting instead (Jakobsen, 1999: 161). Some authors are sceptical about this, and view especially Castaneda's work as probably having enhanced rather than diminished drug use in shamanic western context (Hamayon, 2000). In *Movement Medicine*, the use of alcohol and mind-altering substances is explicitly discouraged during the time spanning a workshop (field notes 26.09.07). However, this is no obstruction to transcendental experiences, as we will see in Chapter 7.

intensive physical (repetitive) movement is one of the widely recognised tools to induce trance like states or ‘altered states of consciousness’ (Hume, 2007: 1; Lange, 1975: 66). There are various types of trance states, varying from light to deep trance (Jakobsen, 1999: 10) and different ways these states are experienced. This is partly dependent on the techniques used, and also on the context in which they are applied. As Morris writes: “*What* will be experienced – its actual content – and *how* it will be experienced are largely functions of the intentions, expectations, and beliefs of the individual and the social and cultural context” (Morris, 2006: 37, italics in original).

Altered states of consciousness or ‘dreaming’ easily occur on the *Movement Medicine* dance floor, although they are, at most times, not a direct aim in themselves. Participants often speak of trance-like experiences (see Chapter 7) which can either occur spontaneously through the embodiment of the dance, during long periods of intensive movement with electronic music or live drumming, or as result of specifically focussed activities such as guided journeys and exercises or, on some of the more intensive workshops, fasting, isolation and/or sleep deprivation. There are also certain exercises specifically designed to experience states of unity and interconnection with the whole group. A difference with traditional shamanism however is *Movement Medicine’s* emphasis on embodiment. The dance helps people to get present in their bodies before any attempt is made to journey to other states of consciousness. This is a stark contrast with many traditional shamanic dances that are explicitly designed to *leave* the body. Trance can then include falling down on the floor, the body shaking, going limp or rigid, from which it takes a while to come back after the trance (Chris Lüttichau, personal communication 22.12.11).

### **3.1.5 *Spirit World and Interaction with Spirit***

Through altered states of consciousness, the shaman accesses the ‘spirit world’, the non-ordinary, alternate reality which co-exist simultaneously with ordinary, daily, or waking reality (Harner, 1980; Morris, 2006: 35). Non-ordinary reality is often divided in a lower, middle and upper world which are connected with the roots,

trunk and branches of the Tree of Life (see for example Halifax, 1982). The spirit world is inhabited by beings that can manifest themselves in different forms and different contexts (Morris, 2006: 15),<sup>103</sup> and it is the shaman's job to contact and interact with them. In *Movement Medicine* 'spirit beings' are an integrated part of the language, tools and exercises, their relationship sought to ask for "help, power and knowledge" (Jakobsen, 1999: 9, see also p. 218). When the space is set up for an intensive workshop, the teachers make an invocation to the 'allies' of *Movement Medicine* such as the 'guardians of the four directions', the 'spirits of the four elements', the 'spirit of the dance', often the four Archangels (Michael, Gabriel, Rafael, Uriel), and the 'spirit of the land' on which the workshop is held. Participants are invited to make their own connections to personal allies and the divine, and to use their own language for it (field notes 31.03.09).

Whether or not spirits have an "ontological reality of their own" (Hume, 2007: 147), it seems that the experience and occurrence of these images are coloured by the cultural frame of reference that the practitioner is familiar with, and that they appear in a form that can be understood by the perceiver, as is also argued by David Young (1994). As such, spirits are considered to be part of the person which takes on the shape of a concrete (anthropomorphic) figure (D. E. Young, 1994: 183), imparting "information that could not be accessed in any other way" (ibid.: 177). Robert Moss speaks of archetypal images or 'culture-pattern dreams' that show people images that their "cultural or religious tradition has schooled them to see," both when they dream and when they are awake (Moss, 1996: 246).

Ancestors, as a different category of spirits, are usually part of indigenous cultural traditions. In some western shamanic courses ancestors are acknowledged, such as for example by Chris Lüttichau from 'Northern Drum', who observed that the acknowledgement of ancestors in neo-shamanic workshops has grown during the last ten years (personal communication 22.12.11). Although, as James Cox

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<sup>103</sup> Morris prefers the term 'spirit' to other alternatives, which, according to him, only add to mystification. The term 'spirit' however retains the connotation of the original Latin meaning "despite the dualistic emphases of Christian Neoplatonism and Cartesian philosophy – namely, that of breath, life, wind, awe, mystery, and invisibility" (Morris, 2006: 15). The term predates anthropology, and Descartes and is even used by Plato and Augustine (ibid.).

points out, participants in workshops do not generally share a culturally recognised lineage and kinship system (Cox, 2007: 159), I do not share his opinion that the concept of ancestors in western settings is therefore only invented and idealised, as both a family and a shared evolutionary lineage, which can be contacted in similar ways as other spirit forms, unquestionably precede each person. Ancestors are also acknowledged in *Movement Medicine*. This includes the line of personal ancestors, the evolutionary development of the human species and the collective ancestry back to the first life on earth. Also, the ‘ancestry’ of the dance lineage is recognised, often naming the different strands and traditions that influence *Movement Medicine* (field notes 01.07.11), and people are invited to think about “what kind of ancestor they will become themselves” (field notes 21.04.11).

The shamanic practice of ‘shape-shifting’ consists of shifting consciousness and embodying some characteristics of animals or objects, is based on the experienced understanding of interconnection and also further enhances the shaman’s connection with nature. This technique contributes to gaining information, and is also used to survive dangerous situations by hiding or ‘becoming invisible’ as part of the natural surroundings (see for example Conway, 2000: 203-5; Harner, 1980: 66-8; Stevens & Stevens, 1988: 83-4). ‘Dancing your Animal’, as Harner called it is practiced in neo-shamanic workshops. In *Movement Medicine* it features in two different ways. Firstly, some workshops invite animal expressions and movements by letting participants dance with an imaginary tail, or claws, and secondly by the emphasis on shape-shifting qualities of water (see §2.2.2).

### **3.1.6 Rituals, Initiations and Ceremony**

In *Movement Medicine* the terms ‘Ritual’ and ‘Ceremony’ are used frequently,<sup>104</sup> many of the exercises have a ritualised character, and ceremonial activities are also part of most workshops. Workshops may include ceremonies that have an initiatory character such as sweat lodges, fire walks, death simulation and burial ceremonies,

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<sup>104</sup> Apparent even in the name of some workshops: one of the ongoing groups is called ‘Ritual’, an intensive workshop called ‘Initiation’.

welcome rituals, arrow ceremonies, ‘Long Dance’ ceremonies (dancing through the night, or even for 48-hours with only a two-hour rest per day) and ‘vision quests’ in isolation (ranging from an afternoon to three days). Fasting and sleep deprivation may be suggested as part of these ceremonies.

Besides healing ceremonies, the shaman often (although not necessarily) plays a role in initiations or rites of passage and seasonal celebrations, in the capacity of ceremonial leader. A shamanic ritual is usually performed in the presence of onlookers or audience, and is therefore always a mode of communication (compare Douglas, 1973 [1970]: 41), including dance, drumming, songs and chants, and dialogue. In that sense, it can be seen as art form with an aesthetic dimension, performance and musical experience (Morris, 2006: 42-3).

It is hard to say something about the role of rituals, ceremonies and initiation in neo-shamanic workshops as this partly depends on the definition of those concepts, the chosen activities, the way of performing them and their context (see for example C. Bell, 1997: 91; Humphrey & Laidlaw, 1994: 64). Although rituals are not always advertised in the description of workshops, they assumedly form a part of most neo-shamanic courses. Some workshops are based on specific (initiatory) rituals: ‘The Sacred Trust’ for example offers darkness retreats,<sup>105</sup> and ‘vision quests’ are possible through ‘Northern Drum’.<sup>106</sup>

### ***3.1.7 Choice, Responsibility and the ‘Dancing Warrior’***

In the process of personal empowerment, assuming responsibility for one’s own life, and finding one’s ‘unique expression’, *Movement Medicine* includes an emphasis on notions of choice, will and surrender, and the “right to choose one’s own story about what life is all about” (field notes 02.07.11). This is called the Warrior’s Freedom, and the concept of the ‘Dancing Warrior’ embraces all these aspects:

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<sup>105</sup> <http://www.sacredtrust.org/workshops.php>, accessed March 1, 2011.

<sup>106</sup> <http://www.northerndrum.com/engkursusframe.html>, accessed March 1, 2011.



A dancing warrior walks their talk and (...) dances their life. A dancing warrior is aligned in body (action), heart (expression), and mind (thoughts). The dancing warrior bridges heaven and earth in his or her own, unique way, bringing dreams into manifestation and offering. A dancing warrior has taken the authority to stand at the centre of his or her own circle. Only you can give this authority to yourself, crowning yourself king or queen of your own country. This authority comes with taking responsibility for working with the material you have been given in life and turning it into life nourishing, dancing, art of life, offering and beauty. This is a life long journey (Susannah Darling Khan, 'The Way of the Dancing Warrior 2011' integration letter).

Although the concept of 'warrior' initially seems at odds with messages of harmony, love and respect for self and others, 'warrior teachings' are apparent in many different spiritual traditions. Integrity, courage and responsibility are key elements of these teachings (Coelho, 1997; Cooke, 2010; John-Roger, 1998; Russel, 1998). According to Victor Sanchez (1995), who condensed or distilled concrete and practical exercises from much of Carlos Castaneda's writings, the concept of the 'warrior' is central to Castaneda's work. Sanchez describes the 'warrior' as a myth of our and other times, which can be seen as an invitation and guide for transforming oneself and befriending life through dignified and purposeful action. It is not something one can become, but rather a path that one chooses to follow consequently and in every action (Sanchez, 1995: 19-22). He furthermore writes: "The attitude of a warrior is a notion, a direction, a persistence in choosing the strongest and most authentic way in each action. Perhaps the most telling characteristic of a warrior is the perennial search for impeccability in every action, even the smallest (...) making optimum use of individual energy" (ibid.: 23). Following this path would lead to equilibrium, fortitude and an experience of permanent abundance, which helps with navigating difficult moments in life. The warrior carries a constant awareness of mortality, which leads to making strategic life decisions (ibid.: 24, 25).

Where 'authority' is usually associated with expert institutes or persons who have power to influence or command other people, the authority of a 'Dancing Warrior', according to the Darling Khans, refers to an integrity and commitment to 'walking one's talk' in a way that thoughts, beliefs and actions are in alignment

with each other and in accordance with one's unique personal characteristics and dreams. They consider using personal skills and talents (part of the 'medicine' as described above) as responsibility and urge people not to allow these parts to remain hidden and unused, as Ya'Acov Darling Khan says in the quote below:

Each of us is charged with the responsibility these days of forging our own medicine from the many beautiful practices that continue to emerge to support us to stand at the centre of our own circles, and from a place of genuine authority, make our offerings. Each of us has many gifts within us and many dreams, some of which are so close to us that they remain hidden amongst the rose petals in the most secret and intimate places within the gardens of our own hearts.

Ya'acov, newsletter 07.08

In *Movement Medicine* the notion of the 'warrior' is accompanied by that of the 'dreamer' who informs the actions of the 'warrior' through intuition and contact with unconscious or latent aspects of the person (field notes 21.01.10), and that of the 'artist' who creates with the 'material' or 'ingredients' that are available (field notes 19.01.11, and Ya'Acov Darling Khan, newsletter 12.11). Together they form a strong positive symbolic structure that emphasises a message of possibility and personal choice within an awareness and acceptance of greater life patterns outside the personal influence sphere. Although this may sound contradictory, it reinforces personal agency, while surrendering to that which is outside one's immediate reach, thus strengthening personal empowerment within a realistic framework. It also underlines a message that "Everyone is creative. Everyone matters. Everyone is unique. Everyone is worthy of respect, love, support, and honour" (field notes 02.07.11). *Movement Medicine* recognises everyone as a warrior, even if a person may not be aware of it him/herself. Teachers support participants in the possibility to make different, more supportive and life-enhancing choices if they want, while at the same time realise that participants' previous experiences and history may lead to different choices than that they themselves would make (ibid.).

### 3.1.8 *Notions of Self and Identity*

Although it was not a research focus in itself, the notion of self as advocated in *Movement Medicine* bears resemblance to New Age notions of the self. This includes “taking responsibility for, and changing oneself, [as] a precondition for concentrating on the ‘outer’ world,” and a spiritual orientation of this process of transformation and change (Prince & Riches, 2000: 187). This image of self includes a sense of sacred aspects within the person distinct from personality, and also the concept of soul. Emphasis is placed both on the individual responsibility for health, wellbeing and change, as well as on interconnection with others, the community and the (natural and spiritual) environment. These two aspects are also recognised within New Age frameworks (Prince & Riches, 2000: 177).<sup>107</sup> It is unclear to what extent any assumptions of the notion of self are conscious within *Movement Medicine*, as again, I have not specifically collected data in this direction. However, my sense as a participant is that both self and identity (the latter is discussed in Chapters 5 and 6) are seen as a process rather than as a static concept, and that they emerge “from the experience of our embodiment, our emotionality and our environment of family, culture, nurture and nature” (Watson, 2008: 112). This reciprocal exchange between self and the world is also described by for example Csordas (1993: 138-9), Fleckenstein (1999: 287) and Shusterman (2000: 159).

### 3.1.9 *Metaphoric and Neuroscientific Language*

The use of metaphoric language is another resource of *Movement Medicine*, to explain both the practice and possible internal processes that may occur for participants on the dance floor. Metaphors can express in images experiences or possibilities that are difficult to express in ordinary everyday language. They make connections between such experiences and our subconscious. According to Berman and Brown (2000) they help to transfer knowledge to new situations and also assist

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<sup>107</sup> For a discussion of several other western views of (development of the) self, including psychotherapeutic views, views shaped by neuroscientific findings, and the self as ‘fiction’, see Watson (2008: 120-6).

people in learning new skills. Through engaging imaginary faculties and creativity, metaphors can furthermore establish profound change in individuals (Berman & Brown, 2000: 4).

Many of the metaphors are geographical, including referring to the mandala as a 'map'. Maps are tools for travelling through unfamiliar territory, providing directions, and also used as metaphor for scientific theories pointing to criteria, dimensions or aspects of value (compare Samuel, 1990: 21-2). As we saw in §2.2 *Movement Medicine's* main map, the mandala, is subdivided in four smaller maps that each cover specific 'territory' or 'landscapes': 'The Four Elements', 'The 5 Dimensions', 'The 9 Gateways', and the 'Centre'. They offer a way of uncovering different aspects of the levels of the self, facilitated by dance (see also Gabrielle Roth & Loudon, 1990).

In analogy with the map metaphor, *Movement Medicine* language frequently refers to being on a 'journey' (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: xv, xvii, xviii). A concrete example of this is the workshop 'Initiation', which is designed as a imaginary 'journey' to an archipelago where each island represents a life stage such as birth, childhood, puberty & adolescence, adulthood & maturity, old age & death. This metaphor is played out during the workshop, by physically getting on a boat each evening, which is delineated in the space by ropes on the floor and a mast with a sail in the middle. At the end of each day, the participants prepare to 'sail' to the next island during the night. Journeys play an important role in literature and mythology, stories and fairy tales. Joseph Campbell describes the 'hero's journey' as a basic pattern in mythology around the world, referring to this pattern as 'monomyth'.<sup>108</sup> Other classical examples are Dante Alighieri's imaginary journey through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise in his famous 'The Divine Comedy' (Alighieri, 1998 [1308-1321]), the ordeals of Odysseus on his journey home after the fall of Troy in Homer's *Odyssey* (Homer, 1971 [1946]), and Jason on his quest for the golden fleece (see for example Joseph Campbell, 1968 [1949]: 30, 89, 203-4; Ovid, 1986 [CE 1]: Book VII and XV). Also in childrens' literature, the journey is often a central, vital element as metaphor for exploration and gaining

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<sup>108</sup> This term is derived from James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (Joseph Campbell, 1968 [1949]: 30).

knowledge (Hunt, 1987). Finally, ‘journeying’ is also a shamanic term for a visionary trance induced by drumming, dancing and sometimes hallucinogenic substances such as mushrooms for travelling to other realities usually the Lower or Upper Worlds (see: Eliade, 1972 [1951]). According to Prince and Riches, journeys are a key metaphor in New Age thinking and can refer to both external and internal journeys (Prince & Riches, 2000: 99). In general it is considered as symbol for transformation in which the traveller is trained and tested, and prepared for initiation (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1996 [1969]: 556-7; Cooper, 1978: 90). Jung wrote that penetrating the unknown is characterised by dread and resistance. At some stage the hero may be consumed by a (mythic) animal. The lucky traveller comes out transformed and possibly resurrected (Jung, 1993 [1953]: 336-9). This symbolism is highly relevant to *Movement Medicine* as, in various ways, peoples’ experiences evolve around the concept of transformation.

Another typical geographical metaphor concerns imagery related to the sea or ocean, comparing the practice with a vessel or compass with which to “navigate the stormy seas as we take the voyage that has only one destination” (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: xvii). For Jung the sea was a “symbol of the collective unconscious, because unfathomed depths lie concealed beneath its reflecting surface” (Jung, 1993 [1953]: 48). According to Chevalier and Gheerbrant ‘sea symbolism’ relates to life, creation, birth and, again, transformation and rebirth. Ancient Egyptians for example believed that their gods and the whole of creation emerged from the ocean, and also in the bible the sea was the symbol of creation or the creator (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1996 [1969]: 837-8). At the same time the sea is treacherous as well, as monsters may rise from its depths and its currents can be lethal (as well as regenerative). The tides reflect a transitory and “ambivalent situation of uncertainty, doubt and indecision” (ibid.). The ‘stormy sea’ metaphor is used several times in the book on *Movement Medicine* as well (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: xvii, xxiii, 11). This indicates a relation to emotions or certain troubles perceived in life which, interestingly, compares to the view of Christian mystics who considered the sea as a symbol of the human heart and as a seat of passions (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1996 [1969]: 837). Crossing it requires a vessel of some kind. Boats are often considered as symbols of security or instruments of

salvation in the Catholic tradition (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1996 [1969]: 1073). Jung considered the ship as “vehicle that bears the dreamer over the sea and the depths of the unconscious” (1993 [1953]: 202). A Buddhist parable cautions not to mistake the vessel for the destination (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1996 [1969]: 837).

*Movement Medicine* furthermore regularly refers to findings in the field of neuroscience, especially with regard to plasticity of the brain, and the possibility to change neural patterns through choosing different thoughts. This is compared to creating new paths through overgrown fields or forests, emphasising that this takes effort (see §6.4). Neuroscientific results are often translated to general media and popular press to increase the credibility of arguments for example regarding behaviour and learning processes (McCabe & Castel, 2008). This is partly possible because they provide “deceptively simple messages,” appeal to general “confidence in biological data” and because of their strong visual imagery (Beck, 2010). Although the brain is considered as “the source of all behavioural learning” and certain regions in the brain are indeed associated with specific activities or behaviour, neuroscientific language and imagery is easily used to sell a certain story, often short-cutting or confusing the explanation behind the results or taking results out of their contexts (Beck, 2010; Thornton, 2011). However, it is good to bear in mind that there is a substantial difference between the brain and the mind or consciousness (Holman, 2011). The belief that improving the brain will “lead to superior intelligence, greater emotional stability, and improved performance” (Thornton, 2011: 2) is widely spread and associated with a degree of health and self-improvement that we can achieve by training our brain. *Movement Medicine* refers to such findings for explanations of the processes of change that the Darling Khans have witnessed both in themselves and in their participants over more than twenty years. The messages are, as in popular media, simplified and because of the nature of popular scientific translations sometimes taken out of context, and possibly ignoring aspects that do not fit the specific understanding of *Movement Medicine*. Nevertheless, the imagery appeals strongly to participants and has become integrated in the practice’s language. This creates an interesting paradox, as *Movement Medicine*’s search for meaning and personal, embodied experience seems far removed from the mechanic laboratory approach of neuroscience.

Whether it is a useful contribution to understanding the practice or rather an unnecessary call for credibility, it fits with trends both in the wider culture and in New Religious Movements in the New Age, stressing the flexibility of the ‘brain’ and the capacity of the mind to improve a person’s overall performance.

Other areas in which metaphors are frequently used, concern emotions and transformational processes, as we will see in Chapter 6. These metaphors are often based on natural images such as icebergs, mountains, rivers; animals (for example the caterpillar transforming into a butterfly); plants and trees (for example the acorn transforming into an oak; and gardens and allotments (for example tending to the body as to an allotment, or the soul as a garden with different seeds, saplings and full grown plants in it). *Movement Medicine* also frequently refers to alchemic imagery such as the ‘philosopher’s stone’, the ‘cauldron of transformation’, and the process of ‘fusion’ of different elements, and in some cases to computer metaphors, comparing parts of the human system to ‘software’ with ‘default settings’.

Lakoff and Johnson showed how metaphors are intrinsically part of general everyday language, much more than we are generally aware of (1980: 3). They argued that “our ordinary conceptual system (...) is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (ibid.), so although the use of metaphors is very obvious and vivid in *Movement Medicine*, this is not aimed at reinventing them anew in contemporary context for its own sake. It rather seems to be part of the collective unconscious that allows images to be easily transferred to situations, processes and activities with similar meanings, and to offer an easy, playful and often humorous aid to learning.

## **3.2 Critical Observations and Comparisons**

### ***3.2.1 Postmodernism and Spirituality***

In contrast to the assumption that we can understand societies as neatly organised wholes in which everything is sensibly structured, Bell (1977) points out that, mostly, “societies are radically disjunctive,” and always negotiate tension between

the techno-economical realm, polity, and culture. All three of these have different aims and principles, respectively rationality, efficiency and bureaucracy; equality and rights; and self-fulfilment and desire (D. Bell, 1977: 424). In traditional cultures, new experiences are “tested against the moral truths of the culture,” and either absorbed or rejected (ibid.: 425). In syncretistic cultures, including the contemporary postmodern western world, individuals choose freely from different combinations that are on offer, which may help to define their identity or life style (ibid.). The increase of importance of internal authority rather than accepting authority from external sources, has been mentioned as one of the developments of modernity, starting in the eighteenth century (Heelas, 1994: 102). Also due to the rise of capitalism, the locus of authority shifted from obeying the authority of God, to the liberal ethic of free individualism, and the ideology of perfection (ibid.: 104).<sup>109</sup> Subsequently, the way individuals related “to the existential questions of culture” started to change (D. Bell, 1977: 429). This slowly undermined western religious institutions, as direct experience gained importance over revelation, tradition, authority and reason. Radical individualism, combined with a slackening of moral restraint and a fear of ‘nothingness’ as the belief in heaven and hell declined, led to a search for new answers, as we have seen in the Introduction. This took form in alternative responses such as rationalism, existentialism, and civil and political religions (D. Bell, 1977: 429-33). Religion became a commodity that could be pieced together according to “particular consumer requirements,” and abandoned if it did not serve those needs (Heelas, 1994: 102).

Paul Heelas (1994) raised interesting questions regarding the nature of religion in relation to the postmodern eclecticism of consumerism that is so strongly part of the New Age movement (see also Featherstone, 1990: 113).<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> The role that religion played in the rise of science, rationalisation, intellectualisation, and capitalism, and the tensions between religious versus political and economical institutions are discussed by for example Hooykaas (2000 [1972]), Turner (1982) and Keyes on Weber’s work (2002).

<sup>110</sup> This included questions such as: how can we rate the quality and depth of spiritual experiences, if enjoyment is a strong leading motive for choosing them? Can spiritual experiences be bought? Recognising that religious life has, to some extent, always been utilitarian, to what point can the ‘believer’ influence the shape and form of religion for it to still be ‘religion’? If religion becomes tailor-made, adjusted to fit into personal lives, rather than people trying to live a life according to the religious rules and doctrine, what remains of religion’s value? What are the limitations of consumer-based religion? If a religion is consumeristic, can it still serve the function of support or



‘Consuming religion’ is, in his view, a contradiction in terms. As postmodern culture can be considered as more or less synonymous to consumerism, he concluded that the notion of postmodern religion is impossible. Aside from a few ‘genuine’ spiritual seekers, New Age is, according to him, not significantly religious, but more a form of part-time escapism (Heelas, 1994: 110). Much of this discussion depends on the definition of religion and its role in culture. I would argue that there are many categories or nuances between ‘religion’ and ‘escapism’ and hitherto different expressions of religious experiences that Heelas did not include.

First of all, Heelas seemed to equal religion with fixed protocols prescribed by large institutions, and refers only to the long-established religious traditions. If however, we see, with Bell (1977), religion (or spirituality)<sup>111</sup> as set of coherent answers to existential questions,<sup>112</sup> then the assumed breakdown of religions, or ‘de-traditionalization’ as Heelas called it (1994: 103), is not that important: “The most crucial of all are the answers, for these go back most piercingly to the human predicaments that gave rise to the responses in the first instances” (D. Bell, 1977: 429). And as existential questions or ‘religious sentiments’ (Featherstone, 1990) are part of human nature regardless of the ideology of a culture, people will always look for answers, symbols and rituals, even though formal traditional religions may no longer provide those in a satisfying way.<sup>113</sup> Paraphrasing Durkheim, the search for and the creation of the sacred is timeless (Durkheim, 2001 [1912]: 160). That the current forms in which that happens are highly individual does not necessarily mean that they are less valid. After all, the great religions too were once

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salvation? Has post-modern religion merely been reduced to a collection of ‘spiritual Disneyland’? (Heelas, 1994: 107-12).

<sup>111</sup> Many New Agers experience discomfort with the term ‘religion’, instead preferring the term ‘spirituality’ (see §3.2.2).

<sup>112</sup> He summarised those ‘core questions’ as follows: “how one meets death, the meaning of tragedy, the nature of obligation, the character of love” (D. Bell, 1977: 428).

<sup>113</sup> This again may raise the issue of consumerist satisfaction over and above religious guidelines (Heelas, 1994). However, through increased education and literacy people have developed skills of independent assessment, which was much less the case at the time when religious institutions became established. The contemporary individual may therefore indeed be more of a religious ‘customer’ than their uneducated predecessors who submitted more easily to the guidance of the religious leaders.

experiences of individuals that solidified through the effort of trying to repeat divine encounters.

Secondly, if we look at one of the (disputed) etymologies of the word ‘religion’ (Andr  n et al., 2006; Barnhart, 1988), ‘re-ligare’ may refer to ‘reconnect’. These reconnections with the sacred can be brought about by many different activities, and at any moment, and are not dependent on specific religious specialists or contexts (compare Maslow, 1994: 29). Out-of-church-settings such as New Age workshops create contemporary situations in which people may experience these connections anew in different ways. For some, this can bridge the gap between the search for answers to the great questions, and established religions that possibly do not address the questions in a language that is understood by postmodern individuals. Even if the original motivation may be aimed at seeking fun and entertainment, and is inevitably embedded in the consumerist, capitalist ethos, the search for settings that enable extraordinary experiences is testimony to the fact that the questions have not lost their relevance.

Thirdly, as the major traditional religions have often been associated with austerity and restraint (D. Bell, 1977: 430; Urban, 2000: 271), the hedonism and abundance of capitalist consumerism may seem directly opposed to anything even remotely associated with religion. More mystical branches of the traditional religions however, embrace and celebrate *joie de vivre* and abundance, and emphasise joy, love, happiness and wellbeing over suffering (see for example Boon, 2003; Vayalilkarottu, 2012). Indeed, when Bell wrote his article in 1977, he foresaw that a new vision and vocabulary would be necessary to address the existential questions, one that would be “fully responsive to the deepest feelings of people” (D. Bell, 1977: 448). Especially with an awareness of coming to the limits of financial growth, natural resources, and the challenge of dealing with the effects of consumerism, he considered “new efforts to regain a sense of the sacred” inescapable (ibid.). Aside from fundamentalist and redemptive forms in which religion might evolve, he saw a third possibility of mythic and mystical approaches that would address the need for wonder, mystery and unity (ibid.: 444-5). The environmental and financial crisis may serve as an eye-opener to abundance, appreciation and gratitude (see for example the contributions in Roszak et al.,

1995). Therefore, as Urban observed, capitalism (and I would add ‘consumerism’) “does not necessarily sound the death knell of religion” (Urban, 2000: 271), as it has also supported (new) spiritualities with finances, technology and global networks and (workshop-)opportunities for redefining our relationship to the mysterious aspects of life. *Movement Medicine* as a new spirituality is a product of both postmodernism and New Age, and yet participants describe a meaningful journey of dancing with the big questions and living the answers.

### **3.2.2 *Relationship to the mainstream and the New Age***

Although there are many different approaches that could be classified under the umbrella term of New Age, they often subscribe to similar notions, many of which are recognisable in *Movement Medicine*. Among the shared notions in New Age practices are, for example, the acknowledgement of a ‘divine essence’ present in all living forms, and the concept of ‘soul’ as a life force distinct from personality that is carried over after death to exist in a different form. Ideologies also include holistic views on health and wellbeing, social justice, gender inequality and non-violence. The role of emotions and intuition are considered important, which sometimes leads to an idealisation of ‘the feminine’ and matriarchal structures (compare Glock & Bellah, 1976; Prince & Riches, 2000: 28). Furthermore, an emphasis on ‘going back to nature’ often leads to involvement with ecology and environmentalism, and to an anti-capitalist ideology. Despite focus on self-responsibility and empowerment of the individual, most New Age approaches also recognise the importance of community and are often familiar with Victor Turner’s anthropological term *communitas* (Prince & Riches, 2000). Both individual and collective healing and transformation are considered important and New Age tools include working with energies, channelling and divination (Hammer, 2005b: 856-7).

Prince and Riches (2000) show in detail that the representation of New Age as ‘other’ than mainstream is emphatically maintained by its practitioners identifying with values and practices that they could not find in the mainstream. They found new solutions to issues that, in their eyes, the mainstream could not

solve, and reinforced this by rejecting and turning away from it and making a ‘fresh start’ in the New Age paradigm. However, the division between the mainstream and New Age is not at all as straightforward as it may appear. We can even question whether there is such a ‘thing’ as the mainstream, or whether it is a construct of New Age discourse. First of all, New Age practitioners do not form a homogenous group. The degree to which New Age notions are applied varies therefore from person to person, and for many only concern certain areas of life, while otherwise remaining firmly engaged in and related to the so called mainstream (Prince & Riches, 2000: 3-5). Secondly, people are naturally concerned with practical daily activities such as “forging relationships, keeping healthy, engaging in work, educating children” (ibid.: 4), whether interpreted as the mainstream or as New Age. Thirdly, criticism of the mainstream is often based on New Agers’ outdated memory of the mainstream as they perceived it years ago, whereas the apparent mainstream has also moved on and modernised (ibid.: 32). Finally, New Age ethical standards, summarised by Prince and Riches as “spirituality, environmentalism, communalism, emotionality/intuition, non-aggression, the feminine” (ibid.: 28), initially seem an exact reversal of what New Agers consider as mainstream values such as consumerism and material accumulation, technology, individuality, entrepreneurship and competition. However, these also play a significant role in New Age even though effort is made to translate them into non-materialistic, spiritual language (ibid.: 28-30, 152).

Interestingly, the term New Age is emotionally charged, simultaneously much idealised and much criticised by both in- and outsiders. Many people whose work and life style could be considered as subscribing clearly to New Age values, distance themselves from it so strongly that “not wanting to be considered part of it” can almost be seen as a shared characteristic of the movement too. The term is often considered derogatory, shallow, superficial and associated with vagueness (compare Pearson et al., 1998; Wallis, 2003). In this respect it maybe useful to use Lowell Streikers’ distinction between ‘left hand’ or ‘ecstatic’ New Age, “of gurus, channelers, (...), psychics, Witches, crystal healers, and other visionaries” and the ‘right hand’ or ‘social transformationist’ New Age “of ecology, social conscience, feminism, responsible investing, and compassion for all creatures” (Streiker, 1990:

10). This sums up the different ‘positions’ within the movement, and the polarisation that seems to cause people especially active in the right hand wing to distance themselves from the movement entirely, although again, their values, beliefs and life style quite obviously seem to subscribe to the characteristics of the New Age worldview. This tendency can also be recognised in *Movement Medicine*, as Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan (interview 28.01.10) also distance themselves and *Movement Medicine* from the New Age label. They jest instead about the ‘Now Age’, although the aims and aspirations clearly fit within the aims of the right hand, social transformationist New Age. Furthermore, followers of both the Human Potential Movement and New Age generally reject the terms ‘religion’ or ‘religious’ for their activities (Glock & Bellah, 1976; Hammer, 2005b: 858). Rather than being part of a larger religious or even dogmatic institution, they stress the individual character of their explorations. The term ‘spiritual’ is considered more fluid and individualistic, and therefore preferred by practitioners over the term ‘religious’, which is considered as more fixed (Hammer, 2005b: 857). Both *Movement Medicine* teachers and participants too affirm this tendency.

### **3.2.3 *How Movement Medicine differs from (neo-)shamanism***

Like neo-shamanism, *Movement Medicine* differs in several ways from traditional shamanism. Jakobsen, drawing from her studies on traditional Greenland shamanism and (Danish) courses in neo-shamanism, describes for example differences in the length of the shamanic apprenticeship, the occurrence or absence of traumatic experiences or illnesses prior to the calling (Jakobsen, 1999: 160, 217), the acceptance, recognition and assessment of shamanic experiences within the practitioner’s culture (ibid.: 162), general occurrence or absence of fear provoking experiences (ibid.: 180), explicit shaman’s knowledge versus knowledge available to all (ibid.: 217), being embedded in culture’s general (i.e. mainstream) cosmology or part of a more alternative scene (ibid.: 180), costs involved (ibid.: 182) and tools mainly being used for *society* or *individual* (ibid.: 222). This may describe the difference between a shaman and a shamanic practitioner; the latter

can be ‘taught’ in workshops, the former is subject to a calling that one has little to no influence over.

In some ways however, *Movement Medicine* also differs from neo-shamanic approaches. First of all, unlike most courses in neo-shamanism, the focus of *Movement Medicine* is dance. Furthermore, *Movement Medicine* workshops are not directly aimed at learning typical shamanic skills such as journeying to the three worlds, finding a power place and power animal, shamanic counselling or healing (compare Jakobsen, 1999). Any shamanic skills that are acquired are almost ‘secondary’ to and always in service of the dance, and the emphasis is never on learning shamanic skills.<sup>114</sup> On the contrary, it is emphasised that the use of those tools should happen with caution and with proper tuition (field notes 02.07.11). Thirdly, there are certain aspects that seem to receive more attention in *Movement Medicine* workshops than in neo-shamanic courses and in these respects may resemble traditional shamanic approaches more closely. This concerns for example 1) the strongly emphasised notion of ‘for all our relations’ (originally a term from the Native American Lakota tradition (Chris Lüttichau, personal communication 22.12.11), 2) small ‘Give-Aways’ or larger fund raising projects which raise considerable amounts of money for charities world wide (see for a description of Give Away ceremonies McGaa, 1990: 121-4) and 3) a life style and practice that emphasises ‘gratitude’. This is not commonly stressed in contemporary neo-shamanic settings, again with exceptions, but also does not appear to be widely documented in anthropological accounts of traditional/indigenous shamanism.<sup>115</sup>

### **3.2.4 *Uniting (too) many traditions?***

One of the criticisms of New Religious Movements, which has also been voiced in respect to *Movement Medicine*, is that experimentally combining and using elements from so many different world traditions, runs the risk of creating “a

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<sup>114</sup> Exceptions to this are the invitation to witness healing sessions and the inclusion of sessions during the ‘Apprenticeship Programme’ and ‘Teacher Training’, which focussed on shamanic drumming and dreaming. Possibly, additional workshops that focus on learning specific shamanic skills may be scheduled in the future.

<sup>115</sup> It may be a natural part of a community’s life style, not noted by ethnographers as significant to the study of shamanism.

scattershot, hodgepodge approach” (Sylvan, 2005: 126). We can indeed question how strong a practice can be that not only includes so many different symbols, practices and traditions, but is also solely designed and developed by two people. In this discussion it would be fair to notice that “traditional religions have had hundreds or even thousands of years to develop effective ceremonial forms” (Sylvan, 2005: 126), so that criticism needs to be viewed in the light of a much shorter development both for New Religious Movements in general and for *Movement Medicine* in particular.

Some may argue that ‘fusion’ or eclecticism of different elements is common contemporary (postmodern) practice in our culture in general (see for example Samuel, 2001: 76), resulting from (virtual) contact with communities and traditions all over the world, and including a wide variety of fields, such as cuisine, literature, and music. Jakobsen for example regards fusion as typical of “the modern open-minded approach to the possible mixture of belief systems” (1999: 213). More specifically, this inclusivity is characteristic for new spiritualities, including New Age approaches, and the contemporary Rave scene as well, which is influenced by the Cabbalah, Sufism, Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist traditions, Native American traditions and Shamanism, Wicca and Western magical traditions, influences from African and Australian aboriginal religions, and historical traditions such as ancient Egyptian and Celtic/Druid religions (Sylvan, 2005: 120-1). Furthermore, shamanism in itself is an inherently pragmatic and flexible tradition, and by nature seems to be able to include and assimilate different traditions and religions. As we have seen in Chapter 3, spirits can appear and are received in forms that are meaningful and understandable to the practitioner. This allows ‘characters’ from very different traditions to appear as teachers or guides. From this assumption it only seems a small step to incorporate not just the imagery, but also the tools from different traditions.

To describe the many influences that shape *Movement Medicine*, the Darling Khans use the analogy of different rivers coming together to create the stream of *Movement Medicine* (field notes 04.04.09). They see this diversity as contemporary expression or translation of ancient wisdom, integrated in their

personal lives in western culture, which has its own unity (Ya'Acov Darling Khan, interview 23.06.11). Ya'Acov Darling Khan highlights this with an example:

When I was given a Native American pipe for ceremony, I always understood that I was being loaned this in order to remember what we had forgotten in Europe. And I think that is a real key. It's not that we were trying to be Native Americans, or live inside their traditions. But I felt what we received from different aspects of those many, many, many different traditions, was an invitation to remember what had been virtually destroyed by mainstream religion and a different cultural story that was being told (interview 23.06.11).

As we saw in the Introduction, the analogy of the river fits well within Samuel's multimodal framework (MMF) (1990). *Movement Medicine* can be seen as an emerging cultural current (MSc) embedded in the mainstream or 'modal' western contemporary culture (MSm). We can identify, for example, the currents of 'spiritual practice', of 'shamanism', of 'training school', of 'business', and of its implicit assumptions including care for self, other and environment. Although it can be argued that the diversity of tools and techniques in *Movement Medicine* creates a loose and incoherent structure, this is not the experience of the majority of participants. Rather, the diversity contributes to meeting the interests of a large variety of people who come to dance, everyone finding something valuable and 'fitting' to work with, so meeting different depths, areas of curiosity, willingness and availability. In this way, *Movement Medicine* appeals to people's interests in numerous ways. Therefore, drawing from such a wide variety of sources does not seem to be an obstacle to the effectiveness of the practice.

Also, looking at the mandala and the symbolism as an overall picture rather than as separate segments, the representation of the practice appears to be whole in itself, and its translation to workshops congruent with the underlying views. *Movement Medicine* symbolism conveys a coherent message of embodiment, transformation, personal responsibility and authority and interrelation with other dimensions of life. If we look at how 'The 5 Dimensions of Awareness' and 'The 9 Gateways' are related, we see on the left side that the place and meanings of Self, the first dimension of awareness, connect to the Body as first of 'The 9 Gateways'. On the right hand side we also see Realization (of oneness) at the ninth and last



gateway in connection with the Divine, as fifth and last dimension of awareness. Although they are both read from left to right, together, the five and nine points from the 'Dimensions of Awareness' and 'The Gateways' form a perpetual circle, each dot participating in the circle, influencing and strengthening other dots. Through the articulation of the mandala, a consistent spiritual practice is created which includes aspects of many different traditions.

Finally, when we look at *Movement Medicine* through the multimodal framework, the question of integrating 'too' many traditions becomes entirely obsolete. The nature of the social manifold is such that it integrates many different cultural currents (MSc's) and countless individual currents (MSi's). Because the MMF is essentially based on the *relationship* between currents, we can consider the *Movement Medicine* current as "as having a body of associated symbolism" just as our individual currents are also built up "from the shared symbolism of our social context" (Samuel, 1990: 63). The modal and individual states or currents mutually influence each other. Currents become 'stabilised' by society's feedback process, and will remain changing, growing and transforming according to this feedback, and similarly decline in significance when no longer supported by this feedback (Samuel, 1990: 69). According to Samuel's assumption "that any system of modal currents, in the absence of interference from other systems, will move towards a condition of greater simplicity and internal coherence" (Samuel, 1990: 151), we can expect that if *Movement Medicine* would become too complex, it would naturally simplify.

### **3.2.5 *Sectarian or Cultish movement?***

Aside from charismatic leadership, some of *Movement Medicine's* characteristics such as singing together, holding hands, and in some workshops wearing white clothes during ceremonies, show parallels with activities of churches, cults and sects. We should consider if these categories are useful to understand the *Movement Medicine* practice. It has the open, inclusive character of churches, and also encourages and practises activities of fundraising for charity, yet is neither bureaucratic nor rooted in a long traditional lineage with a codified liturgical life

and canonical texts (C. Bell, 1997: 205-6). However, participants are not born into *Movement Medicine* as congregants are often born into a specific church. The main distinction between cults and sects is that the former arise “spontaneously using new or imported ideas,” whereas the latter develop “through schism from a larger institution” (C. Bell, 1997: 205). Although *Movement Medicine* developed in and broke away from the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> practice, it does not claim to be returning to original purity and simplicity, which is characteristic for sects. *Movement Medicine* shares with sects a loose hierarchy, emphasis on individual experience and participation, and rites that are more spontaneous and reflective than conventional churches which do not focus so much on immediate experience but in which the congregation is more of a passive audience around mainly calendrical events (C. Bell, 1997: 206). Like cults, *Movement Medicine* displays a relatively independent emergence, yet is organised in a structured, sustainable way with a long-term vision of establishing a training school and community, unlike most cults that are often organised in a temporary manner. Dangers of cults include fanaticism, leaders with too much authority (C. Bell, 1997: 207), thought reform, mind control and brainwashing (Robbins, 1981). Although many participants adopt *Movement Medicine*’s language and spiritual framework, cultivate the idea of belonging to a family (or ‘tribe’) and sometimes refer to the Darling Khans as father and mother of both the practice and of individual selves, *Movement Medicine* does not require rejection of society or the world, communal living arrangements, or loyalty to the leaders. Rather, the emphasis on the personal responsibility of the ‘Dancing Warrior’ shows the opposite.

Bell comments on the creative influence of cults on conventional forms of religion, even though they usually emerge in the margins of society. She refers to Turner’s liminal anti-structural experience of *communitas*, inversion and experimentation within cults, which are needed to renew structures in the mainstream culture (C. Bell, 1997: 207). This is also noted by Glock and Bellah who see the potential of counterculture for both undermining as well as revitalising ‘mainline religion’ (Glock & Bellah, 1976: xv). It seems that these characteristics are present in *Movement Medicine*, although its influence is not so much on conventional forms of religion but more on contemporary life styles that address

spiritual phenomena. This to me is not very different from the message of other spiritual practices and approaches, which offer a framework of meaning to their followers. However, *Movement Medicine* in no way presents itself as a religious institution. During workshops it is stressed that *Movement Medicine* is a ‘story’, and not ‘The Truth’. A ‘story’ that works for the Darling Khans and for many others, but which not necessarily appeals to everyone (field notes 02.07.11).

### 3.2.6 *A Personal Approach*

The Darling Khans’ come across as visible, open and with a willingness “to share themselves with all their ups and downs and all their successes and failures” (Mary, follow-up interview 19.09.08). This contributes to elements of teaching which have little to do with teaching skills on the dance floor (see §4.4), yet they seem to add an important dimension to the *Movement Medicine* experience. Mary claims for example that the example of the Darling Khans’ relationship, combined with the emphasis on gratitude and appreciation both in the ideology of the practice and their practical example, opened a new way for her in her own life. Before Mary started working with them, she would end a love relationship when someone would come ‘too close’. She has since been able to change this pattern, and continues to invest in her long-term relationship (Mary, follow-up interview 19.09.08).<sup>116</sup> These aspects do not directly relate to teaching *Movement Medicine* on the dance floor, but more with the way in which Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan are seen as ‘role models’. Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan are considered by many as ‘approachable’ and interested in people on a personal level, often encouraging participants to contact them after a workshop. This concern for the participants’ welfare, and the personal relationship with the teachers built over time are important features, appreciated and considered as part of the effectiveness of *Movement Medicine*. They contribute to a feeling of ‘being seen’, as Hans B. comments:

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<sup>116</sup> She has been working with Susannah and Ya’Acov Darling Khan since 1999, when they still taught *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup>.

This morning [their personal interest] was exactly what I needed for my process. That catalysed what happened. The combination of the personal attention and the psychological, or therapeutical touch they offer, gives an extra dimension to the dancing. (...). It is not just attention you receive, it is also something personal, when they let you know: “You’ve got a special place in our heart.” Pfew, that does me a world of good. I feel very privileged (Hans B., interview 04.09.08).

However, this personal approach sometimes brings up conflict as well. Five of the twenty-three interview participants (excluding Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan in this count) voiced some kind of struggle or dilemma with this informal style. For one person it was a lack of a personal click, or rather quite a strong dislike, perceiving qualities that annoyed or irritated him. He went to one evening class and never returned. Both Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan are considered to have ‘strong personalities’, and four informants perceive the movement instructions they give as too strong, too strict, too narrow, too intentional, or almost ‘aggressive’, with someone describing it as “feeling forced in a straitjacket.” One person said in an interview:

I lost my own feeling of how I wanted to dance, hearing only how I should be dancing. In the end I even didn’t know how I used to walk anymore. I tried so hard to fit the picture (Anonymous).<sup>117</sup>

The comment on dance instructions leaving no room for spontaneity and supposedly prescribe a “right way to dance,” is interestingly enough also made with regard to *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> teachers. Therefore it seems to be a personal interpretation or perception, related to ideas and expectations of improvisational dance practices, without referring specifically to the Darling Khans. A related comment concerns pushing people too hard, throwing participants in a ‘pressure cooker’, and deliberately “pressing people’s button’s,” as commented upon again by four people independently, and as expressed for example during an interview:

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<sup>117</sup> In the interest of anonymity, I refrain here even from mentioning the date of the interview, which may be tracked back to names in other parts of this thesis.

I always had the feeling that I was whipped on, that I should give more, more, and work harder, harder, and persist, persist. But that has always been my pattern, feeling I need to persist until I crashed (Anonymous).

This person clearly relates her experience back to her own patterns. Susannah Darling Khan recognises in her teaching style “up until a few years ago,” that she really “tried to push things as a teacher,” while nowadays she aims at letting individuals and groups be more “where they are at” (interview 15.05.08). One person felt excluded from a certain workshop because she was said to be ‘too sensitive and vulnerable to participate’ and it was suggested that she would not be able to ‘handle’ that particular workshop. She perceives ambivalence in the general message that is communicated:

They say: “We are here to grow you, and to help you develop yourself and become stronger,” but when you’re puking and totally freak out of your body, then you are not welcome (Anonymous).

She had previously felt that there was not enough useful feedback and support in digesting the things that had been stirred up during a course and also perceived irritation from the Darling Khans when she repeated her point through email contact. Two people expressed feeling ignored after having voiced criticism, and feel that there is no space for a dialogue. As one informant puts it: “They take no responsibility for their side of the story and just make me feel I’m the problem” (Anonymous).

Up until the end of 2011 *Movement Medicine* was the sole ‘product’ of the vision and experiences of two people. This makes it hard to distinguish what in the practice is part of their personality and what comes with their role. The charisma of the Darling Khans is almost contagious, and one participant voices that she would “probably go with it” if the Darling Khans would start “doing something else” than teaching movement:

I do love the dance, and it brings me a lot, and specifically Susannah and Ya’Acov. But I do think that if they stopped dancing, started doing something else, I’d probably go with it. (...) Since you’re asking what’s them and what’s the dance, so it’s some of each. But they have a very

particular thing, and it brings me very particular nourishment, the way they are (Mary, follow-up interview 19.09.08).

This intertwinement of the personal touch with the contents of *Movement Medicine* compares to the approach of many other New Age leaders (see for example Prince & Riches, 2000: 98-102). This also has a downside. One of the critiques of the Human Potential Movement concerns “overly strong bonds of transference and countertransference” (Hammer, 2005a: 577-8), although there is a general awareness of this in *Movement Medicine*. However, three informants perceived the Darling Khans as becoming ‘authoritarian gurus’ after the changeover to the ‘School of Movement Medicine’. They would display an ‘all-knowing demeanour’ without acknowledging their mistakes or recognising their vulnerability. Also, the relationship they build with participants, would leave too little room for independence. Finally, one person expressed a concern around the ‘therapeutic’ nature of the *Movement Medicine*, without, in her opinion, ‘enough background’ nor enough assistance to hold the participants through this kind of catalytic experiences.<sup>118</sup> The creation and protection of a ‘safe’ space on the dance floor is discussed in §4.5.

### 3.2.7 *Movement Medicine and Gender*

My research into *Movement Medicine* through my gendered body, as well as any research related to dance, naturally raise questions about gender issues, which, according to Hanna, “manifest themselves in all kinds of dance” (2010: 222). These include gender as the social interpretation of the two different sexes, sexual differentiation, and inclusion or exclusion on the basis of gender (see for example Hanna, 1988b; Thomas, 1995, 2003, 1997).

However, gender has not been a major focus of this research, and did, aside from a few remarks,<sup>119</sup> not emerge much in the narratives of interviewees. The

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<sup>118</sup> However, both Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan have extensive shamanic healing experience, which they continue to practice, and Susannah Darling Khan has furthermore practiced as a registered Gestalt Therapist.

<sup>119</sup> Notions of femininity and masculinity came up in a few interviews, largely in relationship to dancing with ‘earth’, dancing with ‘fire’, or dancing with ‘yin’ and ‘yang’. Some women also

reason for this may be twofold. Firstly, *Movement Medicine* does not seem overly concerned with the concepts of sex and gender as biologically and culturally determined differences between men and women respectively (see for example Thomas, 1995: xviii), nor with issues of sexual orientation. Secondly, possibly as a result of this and because of my own background, it has not been at the forefront of my personal experience. *Movement Medicine* has mostly been a space where I learned to express all sides of myself. I defined this process more in terms of maturation than of gender.<sup>120</sup> However, a few observations can be made.

First of all, *Movement Medicine* emerged from a relationship between colleagues who are also married to each other. Participants in South Africa drew the analogy of birth: the practice being “born from the space between a man and a woman, [...] from the synergy and relationship between [them]” (Susannah Darling Khan, newsletter 03.11). Through this very structure, the gender roles are equally present in *Movement Medicine*.<sup>121</sup> Most weekend workshops are taught by either Ya’Acov or Susannah Darling Khan, while most (but not all) intensives are taught by both of them together. Regular participants are therefore often ‘exposed’ to the actual physical presence of both a male and female teacher, which offers a balanced gender representation. Even in those workshops that they teach alone, the influence of ‘the other’ is always strongly present. It would be safe to say that *Movement Medicine* would have developed differently either by a man or a woman alone, possibly in a less balanced or inclusive direction. It will be interesting to see

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mentioned how different clothes, such as flowing skirts, affected their movements and made them feel more feminine (see §4.7).

<sup>120</sup> Nevertheless, this process had, of course, gender issues attached to it. During a period of nine months in which I periodically shaved my head to mark the transition from ‘Maiden’ to ‘Woman’, I participated in the ‘Vision Quest’ module. During the week-long workshop, my dances, dreams and physical experiences all evolved around ‘throwing up’. First this happened energetically in the dance, then at night in my dreams, and finally, out on Dartmoor during the 48-hour vision quest, physically as well. These were accompanied by images of regurgitating pink fluffy lining that had created a safe girly room inside, which felt no longer necessary (diary, 14.06.08). It also had to do with embracing and liberating my encultured expectations of womanhood, for example that a woman should always be ‘nice’, ‘polite’ and ‘well-behaved’. Nevertheless, I have not personally associated this journey as particularly gender-oriented. It was merely perceived as part of unfolding personality and learning to include all aspects of myself, whether dressed in baggy old pyjamas or in graceful clothes, whether I was feeling strong, tender, soft, focussed, withdrawn, angry, tearful, whether these expressions be (classified as) ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ (compare Juhan, 2003: 141-2).

<sup>121</sup> The administration of the ‘School of Movement Medicine’ is also a shared between a mixed-gender couple.

whether this balance remains over time, as new teachers start to teach *Movement Medicine* without such a visible male or female counterpart.

Secondly, some research participants commented on the integration of masculine and feminine aspects in the Darling Khans. As individuals they do not succumb to stereotypes, and each of them appears to embody both polarities quite strongly. Susannah is recognised as a very feminine woman with considerable masculine qualities, whereas Ya'Acov, as representation of the male archetype, also integrates quite feminine qualities. Neither of them seem to make much of an issue of it, and as such, they present an image that both men and women can be connected to their essence and manifest sound structures, underlining that gender is not a limitation to finding and expressing personal qualities. Participants reflect that spending time with such role models creates a sense of relief, possibility and transcended boundaries.

Furthermore, although the concepts of 'sex' and 'gender' may not be part of the *Movement Medicine* vocabulary, the polarities of 'yin' and 'yang', or 'the feminine' and 'the masculine' are very central to the mandala (please see §2.2.1 on 'The Centre'). These are seen as qualities that both women and men possess, as well as forces or even 'building blocks' that are present in creation (Ya'Acov Darling Khan, newsletter 03.08). We could add a third category to 'sex' and 'gender' which I would call 'archetypal polarities', to discuss issues of embodying opposites on the dance floor. These polarities are always present in the energetic field of *Movement Medicine*. There are also several workshops address these polarities specifically, for example 'Circle & the Sword', 'Fusion', 'Love Stories', 'Source', and 'The Space between Us'.

Finally, the movement style in *Movement Medicine* can be considered as gender neutral, with a "lack of differentiation between male and female movement" (Novack, 1988b: 107). Although the 'creative life force' and sexual energy are recognised and celebrated, participants are, comparable to dancers in contact improvisation, free to "move without necessarily experiencing sexual feelings and to engage in movement uncharacteristic of gender roles" (Hanna, 2010: 226). Here we recognise Fraleigh's description of Mary Wigman's work, in which "no movements were rejected; the ugly and the beautiful could both tell the truth so



long as they were evocative (...) [and] her choreography is formed less for the gaze than for the soul” (Sondra Fraleigh, 2004: 35).<sup>122</sup> Also, again compared to contact improvisation, “no particular body type, male or female, large or small, is favored or excluded” (Carter, 2000: 187).<sup>123</sup> The instruction to ‘take a partner’ during certain exercises, is neutral and almost impersonal, as it is often followed by the suggestion to “turn to someone who happens to be dancing next to you already” (field notes 01.04.09). One person observed that a *Movement Medicine* dance floor is not the typical ‘meat market’ that some *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> classes seemed to be for him (Robert, interview 18.04.08), indicating that the dance is not aimed at seduction of a love partner. This compares to the work of Maria Pini, who described that although the experience of Rave cannot be detached from sexually-specific body, it does provide an escape from traditional associations between dancing and sex (Pini, 1997: 117). She observed a movement away from dance as a place for sexual pick up, to a place where dancing is central, and provides an opportunity to create alternative experiences of the self and new understandings of inter-subjectivity (Pini, 1997: 118). However, due to the physical nature of dance, in which bodies filled with sensation move to the rhythm of the music, mixed-sex groups do, whether focussed on it or not, add to the sexual atmosphere (compare Juhan, 2003: 131-2). Participants can experiment freely with different behaviours, styles, and notions of intimacy, attraction, eroticism and sensuality with dance partners from the same and opposite sex (discussed in §6.1). This could be interpreted as “fluctuating gender boundaries” (Hanna, 2010: 216). The workshops ‘Sanctuary’ and ‘Wild at Heart’ are a women-only and a men-only workshop respectively. These acknowledge the different dynamic that arises in single-sex groups. This area obviously invites more questions than I can answer based on my empirical data,<sup>124</sup> and issues around archetypal polarities in *Movement Medicine* form an interesting area for future research.

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<sup>122</sup> Fraleigh refers here to the concept of the ‘male gaze’, based on the existentialist philosophies of Sartre and de Beauvoir, through which many gender studies are approached (Sondra Fraleigh, 1991: 15; 1999: 206).

<sup>123</sup> Body images are briefly discussed in §5.1.1.

<sup>124</sup> I am grateful to my examiners Prof. Geoffrey Samuel and Dr. Alessandra Lopez y Royo for pointing this out to me.

### 3.2.8 *Relationship to (neo-)tantra*

Some similarities can be recognised between *Movement Medicine* and neo-tantra, the popular translation of Eastern teachings on the body, sexuality and enlightenment, to western (New Age) context, which combined “esoteric, mystical, Asian and other unconventional forms of religion” (Samuel, 2005: 359). In the countercultural revolution of the 1960s, tantrism became central to new spirituality, as it “helped legitimize the sixties experience” (Urban, 2000: 280), and firmly rooted in the cultural developments that followed.

Therefore, general features of the New Age movement as a modern spirituality are reflected in both *Movement Medicine* and Tantra. This includes those discussed in previous paragraph and, more specifically, the aim of liberation of restrictive habits, but especially the sacralising of widely held values, such as “freedom, authenticity, self-responsibility, self-reliance, self-determinism, equality, dignity, tranquillity, harmony, love, peace, creative expressivity, being positive and, above all, ‘the self’ as a value in and of itself” (Heelas, 1996: 169).

Furthermore, specific similarities between *Movement Medicine* and neo-tantra include the celebration of the body and the embrace of pleasure and enjoyment, notions of self-acceptance, empowerment and ecstasy, an attitude of affirming life by saying ‘yes’ to whatever happens, an ethic of being “all that you can be” (Urban, 2000: 300) and the possibility of “rewriting the psychic software of individuals” (ibid.: 294). Like neo-tantra, *Movement Medicine* sits quite comfortably alongside materialism, and the costs of workshops invite wealthier people and/or those strongly committed to personal and spiritual development (ibid.: 302). However, *Movement Medicine* is based in an awareness of compassion, social justice and sustainability “for all our relations,” and strives towards including people from less affluent backgrounds (see §2.3.4). Although the practice recognises that self-care is important in order to being able to care for others, it is far from the neo-tantric embrace of selfishness as addressed by Urban (2000: 289, 295). Also, *Movement Medicine* is *not* the quick fix to liberation that neo-tantra is sometimes described as (Urban, 2000: 275, 291), nor is it a form of shock-therapy like some expressions of neo-tantrism (ibid.: 299). Although the

polarities of the feminine and masculine as well as sexual, creative energy are acknowledged and receive specific attention in certain workshops ('Circle & The Sword', 'Source', 'Fusion', 'Love Stories', 'The Space Between Us'), *Movement Medicine* is not focussed on sexual techniques, pleasure or orgasm.

Hugh Urban describes Tantrism as "the ideal religion for late twentieth-century Western consumer culture" (2000: 270), because it includes apparent opposites such as spirituality and sexuality, transcendence and materialism, and so suits a "lifestyle of desire and mass consumption" (Urban, 2000: 271). As such, spirituality becomes a marketable, consumerist good that includes transformational workshops (Urban, 2000: 277). Like Tantra, *Movement Medicine* is a reflection of the demands and habits of eclectic contemporary consumer culture, where (spiritual) experiences and values can be sold and bought, and where consumers can select just those that appeal to them (Urban, 2000: 297). On the surface, *Movement Medicine* may not be so different, and its popularity may be partly due to the incorporation of themes that are already present in western culture (compare Samuel, 2005: 358). On the other hand however, Tantra as well as *Movement Medicine* as 'cultish movements' (see §3.2.5) may offer a critique of contemporary culture, and an opportunity to address issues such as gender relations, power dynamics, and rationalism, and present alternative models for relating, personal and cultural responsibility, group dynamics and authority (see also Samuel, 2005: 345, 358, 361). Their ability to challenge mainstream culture and renew existing structures, while at the same time empowering individuals to make those changes would be interesting topics for future research.

### ***3.2.9 Spirituality, Sustainability and Social Justice***

An interesting parallel can be drawn between the three axes of *Movement Medicine* and the work of Klaas van Egmond (2010), professor in 'Earth and Sustainability' at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. According to him, world views and views of humanity can be described in pairs of paradoxes, which soon not just *describe* reality, but seem to *become* reality (van Egmond, 2010: 47). Based on the results of international questionnaires, analysis of historic patterns and on philosophical

notions of especially Hegel, Rudolf Steiner, Jung and Pauli, van Egmond distilled a model consisting of two axes. The vertical axis covers the relationship between heaven and earth, between materialistic and immaterial, between religious and profane, between mind and body, and is also compared to the Axis Mundi (ibid.: 71), which is nearly the same as the vertical axis of *Movement Medicine*. Van Egmond's horizontal axis addresses the opposites of 'I' and 'Other', of unity and diversity, of individual and collective orientation, and is compared to the Anima Mundi or World Soul (ibid.: 78-9). This can be compared to *Movement Medicine*'s third horizontal-lateral axis. When, through certain ideologies or societal trends, specific value systems become overly dominant in a culture (for example capitalism and communism over-emphasising materialism and collectivity respectively), the loss of balance leads to disaster, discontinuity and non-sustainability. An integration of both axes and their polarities is necessary to avoid this.

Although van Egmond's model does not include a specific past-present-future axis,<sup>125</sup> such as the second (horizontal-dorsal-ventral) axis of *Movement Medicine*, his argument for balance is nevertheless situated within and based on an awareness of past and present crises, aiming at a balanced and sustainable future. Van Egmond's two axes are based within the image of culture or society as a circle. Through time, cultures move along the outside of the circle, literally through their different views of the world and of humanity, often from one polarity to the next in a circular movement (van Egmond, personal communication 14.06.11). A sustainable future can, according to van Egmond, only be created when people succeed in uniting paradoxes in their own worldview and view of humanity, or by eliminating cultural 'one-sidedness'. This is attained when the periphery of the circle is not seen as a progression through time, but when the circle is experienced as one unity, one space. Van Egmond draws parallels with the work of Jung, Shakespeare (the *Tempest*) and Wagner (*Parsifal*) in which the circle represents consciousness or enlightenment, and the space outside the unconsciousness (van Egmond, personal communication 14.06.11). Finding our position in life usually

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<sup>125</sup> The connection to past and future is another key feature of New Age as recognised by Prince and Riches (2000: 250) and Jakobsen (1999: 169).

emphasises one polarity, which easily leads to separation rather than oneness (Keeney, 2005: 27). To regain balance, movement is needed, which reminds us of one of the basic premises of *Movement Medicine*. Bridging paradoxes within each individual will increase their self-awareness, which will then lead to the insight that true solutions to global crises are to be found in an increased coherence of different human value systems (van Egmond, 2010).<sup>126</sup> This compares to the emphasis in *Movement Medicine* on helping people reconnect with their creativity. Ya'Acov Darling Khan believes this is crucial “in order that we, collectively, create a new story, and a new paradigm on earth, or... perish” (interview 23.06.11). To avoid large-scale future crises, he argues that as a species we need all the creative potential we can muster. For van Egmond, sustainability includes and is identical to social awareness and human dignity (2010: 83, 179), whereas for the Darling Khans sustainability and social justice are a part of a spiritual practice. This view found a strong framework through the inclusion of the Pachamama symposium, which addresses climate change issues and ideas for a sustainable future (see §2.1.4).

Having looked at the underlying concepts and beliefs of *Movement Medicine* also in relation to other traditions, we will now explore how they are translated to the actual dance floors.

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<sup>126</sup> Van Egmond (2010) also draws a parallel between modern leadership and King Arthur and the knights of the round table, where he compares the King to central consciousness and the twelve knights to aspects of an organisation or personality. Each of them is an expert in their own field, yet only the King can take decisions based on those sub-aspects, that transcends a narrow, self-centred focus and includes a sustainable, long term, future vision.



## Chapter 4: The Ritual Space and the Dance

This chapter discusses the practical aspects of the process and characteristics that contribute to the experience of *Movement Medicine* such as preparation, a description of characteristics and set up of the space, the role of the teacher and music, the importance of a ‘safe space’ which is co-created between teachers and participants, the appearance of the dancers, the dance and non-dance activities. It largely consists of empirical data collected as part of the research, including fieldwork notes from participant observation and interviews. Other information has been retrieved from the internet, such as the ‘School of Movement Medicine’ website.

### 4.1 Preparations and Pilgrimage

After registering for a workshop by paying a deposit, the future participant receives an email containing a welcome, a description of the theme and focus of the workshop (often illustrated by a poem or a quotation), further payment and travel details, and possibly information on accommodation. This email may include suggested preparatory ‘homework’, for instance visualising and focussing on the group beforehand, answering a series of questions, creating an art work around a specified theme, selecting photographs from one’s personal history, and preparing physically and mentally by a suggested diet or detoxification programme. The email also suggests specific things to bring. This usually includes general items such as ‘loose clothes to dance in’, ‘marked water bottles’ and a notebook and pen, and sometimes more detailed instructions for specific gear, props and/or clothes that might be used in a ceremony or party. The weeks leading up to a workshop often result in some degree of resistance on an emotional or physical level, when the participant is preparing for change, consciously or unconsciously. Part of the individuals’ personal preparation also includes making arrangements to leave home for the duration of the course, such as for example childcare. These preparations

can be considered as ‘symbolic behaviour’ which start to change the quality of time and space from profane or secular to sacred (Turner, 1982: 24). Through these actions a different ‘cultural realm’ is constructed, which is “beyond or outside the time which measures secular processes and routines” (ibid.).

This construction of an out-of-the-ordinary space and time is emphasised by the participant leaving the familiar social structure and surroundings, choosing to spend time away that is different from their daily routines. The journey to the workshop venue often involves national or international travel, possibly linking up with other participants for joint travel arrangements.<sup>127</sup> Victor Turner considered this ‘spatial passage’ as part of the ‘separation’ phase, addressing both a symbolic and an actual movement. The former refers to symbolically ‘opening doors’ or ‘crossing a threshold’ when the participant decides to join a certain workshop and internally prepares for possible change and transformation. With regard to the latter, the actual physical or ‘geographical movement’, Turner drew a parallel to sacred pilgrimages (1982: 25). Robyn Sylvan makes a similar observation, comparing the process of travelling to a Rave venue to that of a pilgrimage as a “religious ritual that has a strong spatial dimension” (Sylvan, 2005: 103).

There are some differences between *Movement Medicine* and Turner’s ritual theory. First of all, Turner describes leaving the familiar social structure behind *en groupe* (2007 [1969]: 94), whereas with regard to *Movement Medicine* this usually concerns one single individual leaving his or her social structure, as most participants come from different social and cultural backgrounds, lifestyles, jobs, countries and commitments, to which they individually return afterwards. Partners travelling together as a couple, or people from the same town or city may form a small exception to this, create a subgroup before the workshop starts. Mostly however, the ‘separation’ phase is not shared with an already existing peer group, all of whom in a traditional society would leave and return together after the rite of passage. Secondly, unlike rites of passage in which the ‘state’ of the initiand

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<sup>127</sup> The ‘travel message board’ on the ‘School of Movement Medicine’ website created for this purpose especially, is not frequently used. On average, one message is added each month, which can be a request or an offer for a shared lift. However, once people get to know other participants, for example on an ‘ongoing group’, then travel arrangements are often made informally, resulting in lift sharing with up to four people in a car, meeting on a specific train, or sharing a taxi.



changes, for example from boy to man, or from single to married, *Movement Medicine* workshops do not change the participants' official cultural status (Turner, 1982: 25; 2007 [1969]: 94). This raises questions about the nature of the 'rituals' and ritual space in *Movement Medicine*, and also questions about the effect and longevity of the transformations that can occur. Finally, the inversion of social norms, behaviour and role reversal which Turner describes as different types of symbolic behaviour that help changing the perception of time from profane to sacred (Turner, 1982: 24) are absent with regard to *Movement Medicine* preparations, although 'dressing up' is a frequent part of ongoing groups, which can be seen as a form of role change or reversal.

## 4.2 Arrival and Welcome

On arrival at the venue, people are welcomed and registered by the organiser. This includes practicalities such as checking (outstanding) payments, sometimes taking a digital photograph (used to facilitate recognition of participants by the teachers), and room allocation in case of residential workshops. In some cases a handout is provided with relevant phone numbers and addresses of taxis, doctors, places to eat, and local shops. Generally this registration is scheduled from two hours before the first session. The following description mainly refers to intensive and ongoing workshops, as the introduction and arrangements of weekend workshops are usually less elaborate.

Between registration (usually between 3-5 pm) and dinner (around 7pm) there is a short two-hour dance session. This 'First Dance' is meant as a means for participants to 'arrive' on the dance floor physically as well as mentally by letting go of day-to-day worries, and also serves as an opportunity for connecting with the other participants. Afterwards, the organiser or one of the assistants makes some general announcements. This can include remarks on the programme, the availability of first aid kits, fire regulations and general rules for the use of the space, for example related to outdoor shoes and drinks. Furthermore, depending on the structure of the workshop and the routine at the venue, details regarding meals

(times, need for punctuality) and possibly participation in household chores are explained, such as clearing and washing up after meals. Again, depending on the set up of the workshop, this can consist of signing up for a rota in advance or a volunteering system. Other remarks may concern separating waste, recycling water bottles, the use of disposable food plates and bowls, or introducing the cook.

These practicalities are generally followed by some words of welcome by Ya'Acov and/or Susannah Darling Khan, who often first 'congratulate' participants for having created this time in their lives to dance (field notes 31.03.09). This underlines the significance of Turner's remarks on constructing a "realm which is defined as 'out of time'" (1982: 24). Furthermore, workshops in Devon allow the Darling Khans to teach from home, while often their teaching commitments require travelling all over Europe. In those cases participants are appreciated for making the journey. Although this may come across as overly attentive, it is an expression of the culture of conscious appreciation, gratitude and respect, which relates to 'The 5 Dimensions of Awareness' discussed in Chapter 2.

The introduction talk also may include recognition of the history of the land surrounding the workshop venue. At workshop on the Dartington Estate in Devon, the long history of dance and arts and its artist community is usually mentioned (field notes 31.03.09). In Orval, Belgium, Ya'Acov Darling Khan commemorated the people who lost their lives "on these grounds" during the fights of the First World War (field notes 03.03.09).<sup>128</sup> These remarks are an illustration of the connection to the environment and people ('ancestors') through time, which again reflect 'The Five Dimensions of Awareness'. Ya'Acov Darling Khan explains that when preparing the space for a workshop, he invites the energies of the mandala "in relationship with wherever we are, like the land where we are, the energy of a particular place" (Ya'Acov Darling Khan, interview 23.06.11). Although he recognises that the people who live in the area may not be particularly connected to

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<sup>128</sup> Although Belgium officially remained neutral during this war, the number of Belgian casualties is estimated at 36.000, and the western fighting frontier crossed from Belgium through to Switzerland. From early on during the second World War, Belgium was occupied by Germany and the actions of the resistance led to an estimated 16.200 casualties. See: <http://informatief.marktgigant.nl/Eerste-wereldoorlog.715.0.html>, <http://www.wereldoorlog1418.nl/statistieken/dewolf.html>, [http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgisch\\_verzet\\_in\\_de\\_Tweede\\_Wereldoorlog#Slachtoffers](http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgisch_verzet_in_de_Tweede_Wereldoorlog#Slachtoffers), all accessed January 5, 2010 and March 4, 2010.

*Movement Medicine*, he hopes that the work in some ways benefits “the wider field” (Ya’Acov Darling Khan, interview 23.06.11).

Depending on the level of experience of a group, people may be reminded that wearing socks while dancing can be dangerous, and, if this has not been mentioned earlier, that outside shoes are not allowed in the dance hall. Finally they ask group consent to come on time for each session, be present for each session, remove watches, turn off mobile phones, refrain from violence to self or other and take responsibility for one’s feelings, take care of one’s own needs and limits, treat the venue with respect, and respect confidentiality. People who feel they cannot consent to this are asked to speak to one of the staff before the following session (field notes 11.09.06, Susannah Darling Khan interview 28.01.10). The initial opening during these first hours can be seen as entrance into the liminal space that will be strengthened during the course of the workshop (see also Sylvan, 2005: 100, 108-12).

### **4.3 Physical Features of the Dance Space**

The dance spaces are mostly spacious, light halls with wooden floors, without the usual dance studio mirrors. The main attributes of the dance space are an altar, a DJ desk, large speakers and one or more mandalas, printed or painted on canvas. At first glance these attributes appear to be a curious collection of elements from different traditions from all over the world, like the eclectic combination of symbols described in Chapters 2 and 3. Each component however, contributes in its own way to creating the possibility of “meaningful and transformative” experiences (Sylvan, 2005: 107). Furthermore, as in any dance studio, personal objects of participants such as (hand) bags, note books and pens, water bottles (often decorated with a flower, a name or a hair band), cushions, blankets, back supporting devices and prayer cushions, dance shoes and additional layers of clothing start to clutter the space after a while, although efforts are made to keep this to a minimum.

#### 4.3.1 *The Altar and the Mesa*

Altars vary from fairly simple arrangements of objects to quite elaborate and big thematic installations, and function as a reminder that the dance studio is a ‘sacred’ space. Assistants, organisers, or participating artists are asked to take care of this. Sometimes there is a team of participants who volunteer for this job in advance during ‘ongoing groups’. In all cases the teacher(s) provide(s) some directions or instructions for the meaning and symbolism that need to be expressed in connection to the theme of the workshop.

Depending on the room, the altar can be placed on a table, on the floor, or on top of a medium to low cupboard. It is generally covered with a decorative cloth, creating an atmosphere through its texture and colour. At other times the surface can be left bare, or be covered with sand or earth. The four elements are always represented, for example by objects such as a candle, a stone, a bowl of water, and a few feathers or incense. Also plants, leaves, branches, flowers, or even a small tree in a pot can be part of the altar.

Sometimes people are also invited to put their own sacred objects on it as the workshop progresses, such as (gem) stones, jewellery, oracle cards, feathers, small statues, photographs, drums, cards or books. Sylvan observes this custom in the Rave scene as well, “both to contribute their energy to the altar and for their objects to receive energy from the event” (Sylvan, 2005: 119).<sup>129</sup> In *Movement Medicine* this also serves both objectives.

The mandala is often, though not always, placed on or near the altar (see Figure 3). Besides being the ‘School of Movement Medicine’ logo, it functions as guide or map through the different elements of the practice and as a gateway to the transformations that may occur (Susannah Darling Khan, interview 28.01.10). It is regularly referred to and used as a focus in intensive workshops, literally as a point of reference to what specific areas of the mandala particular exercises are related. The photos below give a visual impression of the variety of possible altars.

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<sup>129</sup> In workshops (co-)led by Susannah Darling Khan, ‘support groups’ (see later on in this chapter) are often formed by choosing a bead from a box. Participants regularly place these beads on the altar during the week, so adding an assortment of glass moons, hearts, stars, and circles.



*Figure 2: DanSing 2008, Zurich<sup>130</sup> Figure 3: Initiation 2009, Devon*



*Figure 4: For All Our Relations 2011, Lucerne*

<sup>130</sup> All photos are retrieved from [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), January 6, 2010 and February 22, 2012, from the group 'Movement Medicine' reprinted here with permission of Roland Wilkinson, the School's Administrator.



*Figure 5: Wildlife 2008, London Figure 6: Arc of Time 2011, Bern*



*Figure 7: Source 2009, Lucerne Figure 8: For All Our Relations 2011, Lucerne*



And finally two physical representations of the *Movement Medicine* mandala:



*Figure 9: Apprenticeship 2011 (by Shiuli)*



*Figure 10: S.E.E.R. Process, March 2011*

Sylvan pays thorough attention to the role of altars as an important part of the Rave scene. Often they are “organized around particular spiritual themes” (Sylvan, 2005: 104). He considers altars together with the ‘musical selection’, as “an important focusing lens through which sacred energies are generated and configured (...) and, for this reason, they are far more than just aesthetically pleasing decorations” (Sylvan, 2005: 118). The role and importance of altars in *Movement Medicine* is comparable.

Besides the physical altar, the whole *Movement Medicine* space is referred to as ‘mesa’.<sup>131</sup> This is a shamanic concept from various traditions from the Peruvian Andes in which the Darling Khans have studied, and also recognised by the Pueblo people of Arizona (see for example Mails, 1983). It may simply refer to a bundle of sacred objects, to the shaman’s ‘healing altar’ (Walter & Neumann Fridman, 2004: 443), or in more abstract way also to the ceremonial space, and cosmology or map within which the shaman works.<sup>132</sup> In some situations, specific all-night ceremonies themselves are called ‘mesa’ (Glass-Coffin, 2010: 208). In *Movement Medicine* the concept is used for the entire space (field notes 03.03.09), which includes the ceremonial activities and cosmology, and includes a general respect for the space, which for some people translates to specific behaviour such as bowing before entering and leaving the space.

#### 4.3.2 *The DJ Desk*

The DJ desk is another important feature in the room, partly because this is the place from where the teacher instructs, teaches, and coordinates the class, but also because of the prominent place of music in *Movement Medicine* classes, which helps to support, direct and facilitate the process in the room. In large groups, the DJ desk also serves as point of orientation in partner exercises. When people have not yet paired up with a dance partner they are invited to ‘come to the DJ desk’, where teachers and assistants keep an overview of the room and locate people who can pair up together (field notes 05.07.10). The DJ desk consists of one or two tables covered by ‘African’ style fabric with symmetrical motifs on it, which are placed along one of the walls or in a corner of the room. These carry elaborate equipment including a set of headphones and a microphone but most importantly a

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<sup>131</sup> The Spanish word ‘mesa’, literally means ‘table’ or ‘natural flat surface’ such as a field or hill top <http://www.spanishdict.com/translate/mesa>, <http://www.openingspirit.com/the-living-mesa/the-mesa.html>, both accessed March 23, 2011.

<sup>132</sup> <http://www.mesaworks.com/thepachakutimesa.html>, <http://www.theshamanspath.com/workshops.php>, both accessed March 22, 2011. <http://www.openingspirit.com/the-living-mesa/the-mesa.html>, accessed March 23, 2011. There are also many online references to ‘mesa carrier’, referring to a person who is ‘chosen’ to represent a specific tradition, symbolised by the permission to carry a (literal or metaphoric) ‘medicine bundle’ for example <http://shamanic-path.com/offerings.html> accessed March 23, 2011.



mixing table and a computer with audio files and mixing software ('Traktor'). These enable the teacher to use several channels simultaneously and to cross-fade tracks and create other musical effects. 'Seamless mixing' and the 'layering of sounds' are two techniques developed by DJs since the eighties (Gore, 1995: 134), which create a set of mixed tracks that "is itself a larger form of musical expression" and "does not stand alone, but is combined with several other elements that create the total dance floor experience" (Sylvan, 2005: 152). This elaborate equipment and the central place of the DJ desk indicate the significance of the role of the music. Where a simple CD player or a live musician provide usually short sequences of music in most dance classes, interrupted by demonstrations and explanations of the teacher, in *Movement Medicine* the music seems to function as a continuous blanket of sound enveloping the participants, which co-defines the space as much as the studio's walls, the altar, and the presence of the teacher(s) and other participants. The music provides a structure through its rhythm and melody, inviting exploration and simultaneously stimulating the unfolding of and providing the support for personal experiences. This shows similarities to the sound of the drum carrying the shaman into a non-ordinary state of consciousness, and subsequently supporting him or her on his journey to the spirit world (Eliade, 1972 [1951]; Harner, 1980; Stevens & Stevens, 1988). The music will be discussed in more detail below.

Usually, a few postcards are attached to the mixing table, facing outward to the dancers, for example an image of planet earth, or images by artist Alex Grey such as 'Praying' or 'Theologue' (Grey, 1990: 73, 94-5). This art touches the realms of matter, mind and spirit, picturing the ethereal, mental and psychic 'planes' of the human being, which help "the self become transparent to itself, thus facilitating transcendence" (Wilber, 1990: 15). Sometimes other pictures are used, such as a photograph of two swans, their heads forming the shape of a heart. Furthermore a timer, a box with tissues, a wooden box with beads decorated with a pentacle, a bell, and finally a range of shamanic tools such as feathers, an antler, a smudging device for burning sage and a few shamanic drums. The mandala hangs down the front of the DJ desk, sometimes together with a laminated collage of the Tree of Life made by Susannah Darling Khan. Often some extra clothing and house

shoes are placed alongside or behind the desk, as well as possibly one or two self-inflatable back-supporting chairs, and some pillows or meditation cushions.<sup>133</sup>

Under the tables, hidden out of sight, is an array of cords, cables and usually a first aid kit with an assortment of plasters and bandages, allopathic and homeopathic medicine, creams, cold packs and Bach Flower Remedies, which people are encouraged to use.



Figure 11 (left): Part of the DJ desk, *Phoenix 2009*, Orval. Figure 12 (right): Ya'Acov and Susannah Darling Khan, *PachaMama Day Switzerland 2010*.<sup>134</sup>

#### 4.4 The Teacher

Besides the obvious physical features of the dance space as discussed above, the teacher plays a major role in defining the space.<sup>135</sup> The tasks, responsibilities and

<sup>133</sup> When Ya'Acov and Susannah Darling Khan are teaching a workshop together, usually all these items are there. If they are teaching individually, some may be left out. The items can therefore be seen as supportive, yet the *Movement Medicine* approach is not 'dependent' on them.

<sup>134</sup> Retrieved from [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), January 6, 2010, added by Roland Wilkinson to the group "Movement Medicine" reprinted here with his permission.

consequently the skills of a *Movement Medicine* teacher include designing the classes and workshops beforehand, keeping a general overview, making sure everyone is included in whatever way is appropriate, giving exercise instructions both vocally and physically by showing a certain exercise, being flexible to let go of the intended structure when required by the needs of a group and creating an opportunity for transformative experiences of participants. In this, it is important to keep in touch with both aspects of the group and of individuals (Susannah Darling Khan, personal communication 02.02.10).

The ‘Teacher Training 2011’ placed a lot of emphasis on the ‘sensory experience’ of the teacher, introducing the concept of ‘embodied teaching’ through ‘interoception’. ‘Interoception’ is explained as the “physical awareness of the interior of the body” which is an indication for the level of empathy and awareness for others.<sup>136</sup> This includes a subtle, intuitive ‘tuning in’ to the groups’ needs, through ‘embodied receptivity’ in which the individual self of the teacher acts as a ‘resonant field’ (Susannah Darling Khan, interview 23.10.08, also in Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 93). Susannah Darling Khan describes it as follows:

When I walk through the space and I’m tuned in, I’m putting my wand (i.e. my body) through the space [holds arm up high, as if holding an imaginary wand, EK] and I’m going, like an antenna: “What’s going on here?” And I’m realising *that’s* where I teach from. That part of my body, for what ever reason, that is highly tuned in into the group field. So what happens in this body corresponds very much with what’s happening in the energetic group. And what my body needs or wants, it’s pretty healthy in terms of its natural movement towards health and wellbeing, it goes “ah, that’s what I need, that’s what we need, that’s what’s happening” (Susannah Darling Khan, interview 23.10.08).

In this sense, the ‘embodied experience’ of the teacher is fundamental to both assess the needs of the group and also to introduce people to new experiences. We could call this ‘teaching through transmission’: what the teacher feels and experiences in his or her body amplifies the learning processes of participants on an

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<sup>135</sup> As indicated before, Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan teach workshops together and separately. In this section I will however refer to ‘the teacher’ in singular form.

<sup>136</sup> See §5.2.1 for the neuroscientific explanation of the term ‘interoception’.

energetic level.<sup>137</sup> ‘Interoception’ is one of the tools that future *Movement Medicine* teachers are supported to develop, and will be explained in more detail in §5.2.1. The level of ‘embodiment’ of previous experiences of the teacher is of direct importance and relevance for the possibilities of participants to access these new experiences. The teacher must have done a substantial amount of work in order for their body to be an accurately perceptive and ‘clean’ tool, which is able to distinguish whether feelings and sensations are coming from within or without. When a feeling or sensation arises in the teacher, they need to ascertain its origin, and take action accordingly, to avoid transference. This requires a high level of integrity. The teacher could be compared to a ‘tour guide’ who is able to lead others on their travels (see Sylvan, 2005: 112-3). In order to do this, the teacher needs to be aware of the ‘integral feedback loop’ from the subtle triangle between the music, the dancers and the teacher him or herself. The teacher aims to pick up the response of the dancers and the energy in the group to the process through his or her bodily sensations (Susannah Darling Khan, personal communication 02.02.10), using several musical techniques such as increasing tempo, volume or instrumental density as well as verbal instructions as tools to guide and facilitate the processes of realisation, transformation and healing. This compares to the traditional role of a shaman, or, in Sylvan’s words, a ‘ceremonial leader’, who is “responsible for leading dancers into the powerful experiential states that connect them to the sacred” (Sylvan, 2005: 112).

#### **4.5 Creating a safe environment**

One of the tasks of the teacher is to create a safe environment in order for people to open up to new experiences. This happens first of all by establishing consensus and agreeing consent with the participants about the parameters at the beginning of the workshop, as described earlier. Ya’Acov Darling Khan explains the implicit characteristics of *Movement Medicine* spaces furthermore as:

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<sup>137</sup> Although up until now I have not been able to find any literature on the concepts of ‘embodied teaching’ and ‘teaching through transmission’ in a way that is relevant to this exploration of *Movement Medicine*, I believe they are too significant to not be mentioned here.

... a safe space, a respectful space. It's a space where you're free to explore and experiment with who you are, it's a space of learning, it's a space where what you already know is respected, it's a space where what you don't know you know is invited forward. (...) It's a space where you can expect a certain level of responsibility from who is holding that space, you can expect a certain level of respect, you can expect that you won't be interfered with or messed around with, you can expect that nothing will be done to you, you can expect that you are encouraged to find your own authority and autonomy. These are implicit assumptions within *Movement Medicine*, that are represented by and are contained within the energetic configuration of the mandala (Ya'Acov Darling Khan, interview 23.06.11).

Susannah Darling Khan emphasises that *Movement Medicine* aims to create a space where people can be themselves, without being rejected, ridiculed, pushed away or demanded to be different (Susannah Darling Khan, transcription movie 'Long Dance' 07.10).<sup>138</sup> It is, as much as possible, a judgement-free space, and a space of permission. For several participants this is the first such place in their lives, as Mieke describes:

I just kept trying things out, that first year. Everything was new, so I didn't have the feeling that I could do things right or wrong, it was all exciting. It was like a playground, a place where I could totally be myself, totally happy, and try out things which I wasn't allow to try out as a child, because my mom always kept me very tight, very inhibited. Here everything is allowed, I can explore all of it.

Mieke, interview 26.04.08.

The space is often compared to a "playground, or a research laboratory in which you can try out new things, and show new things, and feel new things through your body," emphasising the possibility to "exercise with life" (Mirjam, interview 22.11.07). This has strong connotations with the laboratory of the alchemist (Jung, 1993 [1953]: 37). It is essential that participants feel safe enough to go through their process in their own time, without being forced to do so. The 'interoception' of the teacher helps with this, because through his/her own body, the teacher has a sense of the pace at which (s)he can guide the group. This is essential to create a

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<sup>138</sup> Made by cinematographer Ben Cole:

[http://web.me.com/bencole/Ben\\_Cole\\_Cinematography\\_web\\_site/The\\_Long\\_Dance.html](http://web.me.com/bencole/Ben_Cole_Cinematography_web_site/The_Long_Dance.html), accessed September 22, 2010.

field of trust (Susannah Darling Khan, personal communication 02.02.10). It is also acknowledged that the responsibility for creating a safe space is a joint operation with and between the participants as well, which the teacher cannot do alone. This is partly dependent on the level of work that the participants have done individually and, in the case of 'ongoing groups', collectively. Susannah Darling Khan describes how 'intensives' or 'ongoing groups' create a "deep immersion learning environment" which she contributes to the level of commitment of the dancers, the breaks and nights which allow integration to happen in between sessions and during sleep, and the result of 'working together' (Susannah Darling Khan, newsletter 03.07). This is tangible not only to the teacher, as Hans A. explains:

It was very important that I entered an experienced group that could carry me. They weren't beginners, so I felt carried, I felt the security. That is very important. That you are carried. That no one is watching you from the side, but that you're doing it together (Hans A., interview 26.04.08).

This 'co-creation' is sometimes encouraged by holding hands in a big circle, squeezing each other's hands and imagining a current of light streaming through the hands (field notes 11.12.07), and can also be encouraged by remarks from the teacher such as: "The more you can let go, the stronger the circle. The stronger the circle, the more you can let go" (field notes 22.03.07). Aside from the group field, individual participants are also invited to strengthen their own circle of protection, to call on their personal resources including allies, spirit helpers or higher self, and to repair the energetic space around the body if necessary by visualising a strong 'luminous egg' around them, which can be mended and strengthened at will (field notes 11.12.07).

An implicit code of conduct also stimulates awareness of and responsibility for the other dancers in the space. When for example 'releasing' a particularly strong emotion such as anger, it is requested to consciously direct this at the floor, ceiling, a wall or window, rather than at people in the group. In turn, other people experiencing strong responses to that are actively encouraged to work with those responses and to strengthen their personal boundaries, for example by energetically visualising a 'ring of protection' around them, in which sound or energy cannot

penetrate. Thus, on the one hand, sensibility is encouraged around not invading or imposing on other people's space by taking care of expressing or releasing things in a responsible way. On the other hand, an active relationship to protecting boundaries is stimulated. On the interpersonal level, violence, or other ways of physically crossing someone's boundaries are not tolerated, and physical contact between dancers needs to be consented to by all parties. The right to saying no is underlined.

The responsibility of creating a safe space requires the teacher to assess whether a workshop would suit a participant, based on previous experience with that person or on factual information of, for example, previous history with mental instability. Therefore, participation in intense workshops such as the 'Phoenix Retreat' is based on application only. The content, the number of participants in the workshop and the availability of staff will not necessarily provide sufficient personal support for everyone, especially for people who are working with severely traumatic issues or have in the past shown difficulty maintaining their own boundaries. This is a very sensitive area, and clear, satisfying communication between the Darling Khans and some participants has not always been possible. The approach of the Darling Khans (and several *5Rhythms*™ teachers as well) is perceived by some participants as arrogant, displaying a lack of respect and skills, leading to feelings of inferiority, rejection or exclusion in the participant (Anonymous, personal communication 30.01.12). This criticism includes the group size, communication and responsibility of those involved. In my experience however, the Darling Khans take serious care in this assessment, considering realistically what, in terms of safety, they can offer an individual while also tending to the group dynamic. Sometimes the groups are too big or the work too catalytic to support individuals with more delicate needs. In some cases they stress that participants are certainly welcome, but are strongly advised for their own sake to engage in additional one-to-one therapy (such as body-oriented or core-process psychotherapy) before engaging in another workshop (field notes 29.11.09). A strong reaction to such decision may be an indication for (un)readiness to participate, although of course, this is difficult to assess. These decisions are ultimately made through concern for safety for all involved and require a certain

strictness to protect the individual, the group field and the teacher. Although all people present create a safe space together, the ultimate responsibility for this lies with the teacher.

#### 4.6 The Music

As described above, music, although intangible, defines the space as much as the physical features of the space such as the altar and DJ desk. Ten or fifteen minutes before the session starts, the teacher will start to play music.<sup>139</sup> The sound thus creates an atmosphere, or a “landscape of feeling” (Juhan, 2003: 138) before participants arrive. Ya’Acov Darling Khan speaks of “painting a picture” “in which people can move” (interview in Juhan, 2003: 137). At the same time, according to Susannah Darling Khan, “the music gives form to what is already emerging. It echoes what is already there or would be there if people realized it” (ibid.). The choice of music is dictated partly by musical concerns to match one track to another, but primarily to “meet the participants” in their process, and to invite them to take a next step (Susannah Darling Khan, interview 28.01.10).

Music is therefore carefully selected from a tremendous variety of different songs and genres, including instrumental, vocal, popular, devotional, percussion, classical, spoken poems and world music. In their iTunes digital music libraries, the Darling Khans have nearly 13,000 songs to choose from (Ya’Acov Darling Khan, personal communication 04.03.10). They put considerable time and energy into listening to music and finding appropriate tracks, which they bring together in a ‘playlist’ for each session. Using recorded tracks means that the music is in a sense disconnected from the context in which it was originally created. However, as mentioned above, the seamless mixing of tracks creates a new piece of music, being in itself a “form of musical expression” (Sylvan, 2005: 152) composed especially for the purpose of that particular movement session. The ‘interoception’ of the teacher is important too with regard to choosing music, to “see and listen to

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<sup>139</sup> The ‘School of Movement Medicine’ has a PPL broadcasting licence to play music in public places (Susannah Darling Khan, interview 28.01.10).



the energy in the room” through the internal perceptions of the teacher’s body (Caroline Carey, personal communication 11.10.10), and then to respond with music that meets that ‘vibration’ (Christian de Sousa, personal communication 07.03.11).

A session generally starts with slow and meditative tracks, from for example Deva Premal or Krishna Das. Later on it may include percussion, or ecstatic dance music, such as from Bahramji’s album ‘Sufi Safir’, but also popular artists or bands such as Michael Jackson, Genesis, Kate Bush, Dead Can Dance, Madonna and St. Germain find their way to the dance floors. Sessions are generally concluded with slow, quiet music again, often with a devotional touch, for example from the album ‘Devi’ by Chloe Goodchild. The musical style is dependent on the personal preference of the teacher, as using music that is “close to one’s heart” is encouraged (field notes 02.07.11).

Some music is especially created for *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> and more recently *Movement Medicine*. Albums from Gabrielle Roth,<sup>140</sup> Susannah Darling Khan,<sup>141</sup> and from Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan<sup>142</sup> are therefore frequently used in classes. That these albums have been purposefully composed to be used as dance music does not seem to make a major difference compared to other music which is created for listening to in other contexts. Most important is that the overall ‘soundscape’ or set of tracks as a whole creates an atmosphere (or vehicle) to support the dance experience.<sup>143</sup>

Classical music is sometimes used and occasionally Susannah Darling Khan creates an entire session with just classical music. In the newsletter of January

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<sup>140</sup> Gabrielle Roth and the Mirrors produced, amongst others, albums called ‘Bones’, ‘Waves’, ‘Zone Unknown’, ‘Initiation’, ‘Luna’, ‘Refuge’, ‘Ritual’, ‘Still Chillin’’. <http://www.movementmedicineshop.com/home.php>, accessed October 15, 2009.

<sup>141</sup> Susannah Darling Khan and Be-Attitude created two albums called ‘Party for God’ and ‘Wild Prayer’, and together with other musicians an album called ‘Still Waves’, <http://www.movementmedicineshop.com/home.php>, accessed October 15, 2009.

<sup>142</sup> ‘Movement Meditations Volume 1’, the CD accompanying the first book Darling Khan & Darling Khan (2009), and ‘21 Gratitudes’ recorded during the ‘Summer Long Dance 2010’.

<sup>143</sup> These and other albums are sold through the *Movement Medicine* shop, which as a separate business makes little or no profit. The aim of the shop is providing participants with music relevant to this dance practice, making albums available that are difficult to obtain elsewhere. Recently the shop also started selling DVDs on for example climate change (Susannah Darling Khan, interview 28.01.10). Some of the CDs are available through [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) as well.

2008, she published one example of such play list.<sup>144</sup> Most of these pieces are fairly well known, which may affect the participants' experience in a positive or negative way, but not more or less so than with familiar popular music. However, the use of classical music is relatively uncommon.

Lyrics in the music are sometimes used to lead the dancers in a particular direction or to strengthen a certain feeling such as 'belonging', by playing songs such as 'Pacha Mama' on Darpan's album 'Fly Away' where the lyrics emphasise: "I'm coming home, to the place where I belong." Often those dancers that know the song will sing out loud throughout the track, which seems to create a sense of community and belonging. Writing about *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup>, Juhan recognises this as well:

Music with lyrics can be used to call up images and emotions and can speak to collective themes present in a group. Using a song with lyrics that talk about a deep longing, for instance, will communicate to students that they are not alone with this feeling—that others feel this longing. They can feel the resonant longing in the wail of the singer and, through that artist, hear their own and a thousand other lonely calls. The feelings become or can be felt as archetypal. Music with or without words can universalize experience (Juhan, 2003: 139).

Sometimes live music takes over, when the teacher(s) and sometimes an assistant take up a (shamanic) drum, guitar, and improvise with singing, humming or whistling. This can be the case with guided journeys in which the teacher speaks the instructions directly into the microphone, or with pre-recorded material accompanied by drums, voices and other instruments.<sup>145</sup> Occasionally an entire workshop will be accompanied by live music, such as 'Resonance' with drummer

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<sup>144</sup> "Arvo Part [sic]: Spiegel im Spiegel, Albinoni: Adagio in G Minor, Bach: Air on a G String, Beethoven: Moonlight Sonata, Faure [sic]: Elegie Op 24, Elgar: Cello Concerto in E Minor (Jacqueline du Pre [sic]), Prokofiev (Romeo and Juliet): Montaguts and Capulets, Carl Orff: Fortuna, Handel: Hallelulah Chorus, Bach: Brandenburg Concerto no 3 in E, Vivaldi: Four seasons, Summer (Nigel Kennedy), Strauss: Beautiful Blue Danube, Vaughan Williams: Fantasia on Greensleeves, Pachelbel: Canon in D, Satie: Gymnopedie [sic], Vivaldi: Winter (Yehudi Menuhin), Tavener: The Protecting Veil - Dormition (Yo Yo Ma), Mahler: Symphony No 5 in C Sharp major" (Susannah Darling Khan, newsletter 01.08). Extracts of these pieces are used, so the length of this session would be around two hours.

<sup>145</sup> These two examples are on *Movement Meditations Volume 1*, the CD accompanying Darling Khan & Darling Khan (2009).

Ben Burrow. Although singing exercises create live music too, this is not generally used to dance on.

Healing properties have been attributed to music throughout history and across cultures (see Bunt, 1994: 3; Sokolova, 2006: 74; Wigram et al., 2002: 11, 17), and music therapy has been applied clinically over the last fifty years (Aldridge, 2004: 96; Wigram et al., 2002: 11). Although I cannot go into a detailed discussion of the healing qualities inherent in music, its possible contribution needs to be recognised when discussing the aspects that contribute to the transformative experience of *Movement Medicine*. According to Colleen Purdon, music can support the development of identity, fostering “the development of a person’s sense of self, and the demarcations between self and other” (Purdon, 2002: 111). She furthermore mentions aspects as celebration, “attention on the uniqueness and differences of each person,” and the recognition of the uniqueness of a group as powerful learning experiences (ibid.). Music “loosens up rigid or static attitudes and feelings, and promotes dynamic changes in the individual” (ibid.). This shows clear parallels to the qualities attributed to dance in the field of Dance Movement Psychotherapy (Penny Lewis, 1986; Payne, 1992; Penfield, 2001). Lastly, drums and voice are used by shamans as one of the means to induce trance to travel to other worlds (Fachner, 2006: 21), although there are no common features of music causing trance, as this is context-dependent (ibid.: 20).

Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan have been DJ-ing for over twenty years. The transition from *5Rhythms*™ to *Movement Medicine* did not lead to a drastically different musical style. However, a few observations can be made. The most significant difference is that *5Rhythms*™ classes are constructed musically according to a rise and fall in the number of beats per minute (bpm), starting at round 70 bpm, which is “approximately the same as the resting heart rate” (Dangerfield, 2007: 17), through ‘Staccato’ where the tempo increases up to the third and fastest rhythm called ‘Chaos’ where the bpm has increased “to around 140, the approximate heart rate of physical exertion” (ibid.).<sup>146</sup> Then it comes down again, creating a ‘Wave’ in the musical process, which is partly why *5Rhythms*™

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<sup>146</sup> As comparison, Gore writes the number of beats per minute for inducing trance is 180 (Gore, 1995: 134).

classes are called 'Waves'. *Movement Medicine* does not rely so much on the tempo of the music, and has moved away from the idea of a 'Wave' and instead works with the four elements as one of the guiding principles (discussed in Chapter 2). There is however no specific tempo for each element, and it depends on the group and the type of work during a session what type of music is used. 'Fire' for example can be slow, or fast and fierce; 'Water' can be cathartic but also gentle, and 'Air' might be light and playful or intensely profound. It may happen that the music speeds up at a certain moment, to slow down again, and then speed up later all within the structure of the same 'element', which would not happen in a *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> sequence. In general, the choice of music became gentler than before, and the 'First Dance' as the warm up is called, starts at a much lower level of bpm's. Finally, according to Susannah Darling Khan, *Movement Medicine* uses more 'ethnic percussion' and music with 'real instruments', rather than strong mechanic beats (Susannah Darling Khan, interview 17.04.07; personal communication 02.02.10).

#### 4.7 The Dancers...

According to personal style and taste, preference and comfort, people wear smart clothes or old pyjama's, leggings and t-shirts, footless stockings, wide legged or tight pants, with or without (un)intentional holes, with designs, statements or plain, multi coloured or black, often layered, bare foot or in different types of dancing shoes (compare Thomas, 2003: 186). In short, there is not one singular dress style as there is no prescribed costume or outfit, except that it is encouraged that garments allow free movement. Men often dance bare-chested after warming up. Quite a number of people (men and women) adorn their bodies with jewellery and/or tattoos. Women furthermore may be wearing skirts or dresses and some wear make up, nail polish, and have flowers in their hair. Occasionally men can be wearing skirts or dresses too, or experiment with make up and nail polish, although this is exceptional. Several women comment on how wearing a skirt gave them a

whole new experience of femininity. Sometimes this is related to a particular element, as Jude describes in the quotation below:

The earth element was helped along by my first time dancing with a skirt, can you believe it! This added a new dimension to the dance, light and floaty steps exchanged the usual funky ones, and I felt unbelievably elegant. Its incredible how long its taken me to wear a skirt, with such an inner knowing that it would help me to embody another aspect of the feminine. This delightful noticing was mixed with strong power stances to more embody the earth element. The teaching came to feel safe being grounded as I am abundantly supported and not to be in fear of living in this reality (Jude, newsletter 04.08)

A few interviewees mention that dress style is closely related to their identity and observe a connection between changes in personality and changes in the way they dress. This is for example expressed by Paloma:

You listen more to what you want, what you need, what you want to express. Do I need today the blue colour, do I need the trousers today, or jeans? I was less feminine before. So I started dancing in a corner, with a dark blue track suit, and today I wear this [points at her aqua blue skirt and tights, beautifully knitted knee-long elegant multicoloured pastel jumper], and dance in the middle! (Paloma, interview 24.11.07).

In the Rave scene, clothes, hairstyles, tattoos and body piercings have been topic for debate, discussing whether a display of fashion led to a practice of judging people by appearance (Sylvan, 2005: 104). This does not seem to be the case with *Movement Medicine*. In my personal experience, I did not feel different, nor felt treated differently after consciously shifting from dancing in baggy old pink pyjamas without feeling judged or criticised, to wearing nice clothes to “honour spirit and the sacredness of the dance” (diary, 03.11.08).

#### **4.8 ... and the Dance**

*Movement Medicine* is built on individual free, primarily solo, movement improvisation. In general there are no set steps, routines, choreographies or

formations. Each session begins without any instructions, giving the dancers time to warm up and move according to their own needs. Later on according to the focus of the session, the teacher will give exercises and instructions. Suggestions are made to focus movement, deepen it, and embody it more, with a general aim of all “finding their own dance.” Personal tendencies or habitual preferences to move in a certain, familiar way are distinguishable, creating a ‘personal signature’ to each person’s movement. Therefore, everyone seems to move in a different way at first sight, making it hard to find a general description of movements, as becomes apparent in the photos below.



*Figure 13: Awakening 2009, Dartington*



*Figure 14: Awakening 2009, Dartington*



*Figure 15: Source 2009, Lucerne Figure 16: Combatants for Peace 2010, Israel*



*Figure 17 and 18: DanSing 2010, Prague<sup>147</sup>*

As there are no prescriptions or particular limits regarding the nature of the dance (its appearance, movements, tempo, volume or aesthetics), the only limits on an individual level are those defined by someone's own parameters such as flexibility, fitness, energy levels, moods, emotions and process. This means that making loud

<sup>147</sup> All retrieved from [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), January 12, 2010, and February 22, 2012, added by Roland Wilkinson to the group "Movement Medicine" reprinted with permission.



sounds, dancing in an overtly sensual, sexual, aggressive manner or displaying any other explicit expression that in other contexts would possibly be considered offensive or objectionable is accepted and encouraged. No comments are made regarding ‘good’ or ‘bad’ dancers.

Fiona Buckland raises an interesting issue regarding the nature of improvised social dancing,<sup>148</sup> compared to more structured dance forms. In the former, according to her, the dance does not exist outside of its participants, and is therefore “a verb, rather than a noun, an activity rather than an object of knowledge” (F. Buckland, 2002: 7), unlike social dances with formal scores such as tango. I challenge this based on my experience of *Movement Medicine*. Even though it is improvised and informal, this practice seems to recall a deep instinctive memory of rhythm and experience of moving the body that people recognise on some level, even if they have never danced *Movement Medicine* before. Although my research did not extend to club culture or other scenes of improvised social dancing, I believe that somehow the possibility of dance lives inside of everyone as a resource that we only need to ‘remember’ and ‘access’, preceding the potential for language that we all have. With regard to *Movement Medicine*, as the first teachers and apprentice teachers other than the founders have just started to teach *Movement Medicine* in their own ways, the practice, although largely based on improvisation, is more and more starting to exist outside of its body of participants. When Rosie Perks organised a series of five *Movement Medicine* drop in classes in the autumn of 2011 in which I assisted, we experienced a growing energetic configuration or ‘memory’ even though, with the exception of one person, each class welcomed an entirely new participants.

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<sup>148</sup> Even in improvised settings, certain movement conventions or competencies may arise (Howard Davies, personal communication 15.05.09). The emphasis on “finding your own dance” in *Movement Medicine* and the various movement abilities and vocabularies of individual dancers do lead to a diversity of styles. Still, a certain signature can be recognised that emphasises some and seems to exclude other movements. For me for example, it took a long time to ‘dare’ to dance on my toes, or lift my legs high, or move big, as I simply thought that was too ‘ballet-like’ and would not be appropriated on this dance floor, fearing I would be considered as ‘show off’. I know fellow dancers with a professionally trained background in for example classical ballet, who experienced similar issues. The question is whether this is an individual perception or a collectively enhanced movement style that is supposed to look a certain way. If this were the case, it would reduce the opportunities to truly improvise. However, my personal experience indicates that any inhibition or restriction regarding *Movement Medicine* is more in an individual dancer’s perception than that it is prescribed by the practice. I am not sure if this is the same for the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup>.



It was also interesting to observe while analysing my dance diary, there were surprisingly few entries on physical aspects of the dance as such. More attention was paid to emotions and personal processes and insights. This was, with a few exceptions, also the case in both the interviews and in the newsletter articles. It seems to indicate that the *appearance* of the dance as such plays a minor role, and that the inner (emotional) *experience* is considered more important. Instead of an aesthetic medium, movement is seen as the catalyst and vehicle for embodied emotions, insights, and presence. Nevertheless, we can make a few general movement observations.

#### 4.8.1 *Movement Observations*

First of all, there is a great variety in the ability of different dancers. Some appear very flexible, have access to an extensive personal movement vocabulary and move through the space confidently, where others may be dancing an inward, delicate and stationary dance, with possibly less variation in movement expression. This may even vary from moment to moment for each individual, as a person's process can change abruptly from quiet and internal to big and extrovert.<sup>149</sup> Also, the dancers' movements often convey an emotional quality such as 'sad' or 'playful', 'inspired', 'bored' or 'angry'.

During the 'First Dance' or warm up, it is not uncommon to see a third of the dancers lying down or moving on the floor. While the session progresses, people slowly get up to their feet, although nearly always one or two stay on the floor, or come back to the floor after having moved on their feet.<sup>150</sup>

Although the DJ desk serves as natural focus point, there is no 'front' of the room and people are facing all directions. There are some exceptions to this.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> In my diary I often wondered about experiencing an entirely different movement quality: "*who's doing the dancing in here?*" Also after having gone through an intense process, I sometimes hardly recognised the movements my body was making (diary 24.10.07).

<sup>150</sup> Sometimes Susannah Darling Khan offers a relaxing meditation and slow warm up after a lunch break. Lying on their backs, people are instructed to gently rock their tailbone, followed by some time in foetus position before getting up. Sitting back to back with someone may conclude this, and possibly exchanging a short massage with each other.

<sup>151</sup> Connecting to the Tree of Life is sometimes done in a circle; half of the dancers may be holding a circle, while the other half dances in the middle of it; dancing with the Elements sometimes

People also sit, pray, meditate and dance in front of the altar (compare Sylvan, 2005: 119). In halls where there is a possibility to go outside, for example on a wooden deck or patio, people sometimes move outside to dance, still connected to the space, music and people inside. Mostly, people tend to dance on the spot, with a few exceptions of people who are walking or running around, or skipping-and-jumping. At times everyone is actively encouraged to move through the space, for example by focussing on making contact with the other dancers by touching the wrists of the people that one passes. The majority of people tend to dance with down cast eyes when dancing solo. When instructed and made aware of this, chins and eyes are raised. Finally, making sounds is accepted and encouraged, and depending on the session few or many people grunt, speak, shout or cry out loud.

On a subjective, interpretative level, the movements often leave an impression of images or ‘stories’ that can be read in the dance. This is what Susannah Darling Khan calls the ‘metaphorical’ level of movements. During a workshop, half of the participants who had been observing the other half dancing, described them as “big cats with paws and a tail moving stealthily through the jungle,” “seaweeds on a current” and “birds flying through the sky,” and their movements resembling ‘waving trees’, ‘tribal people’, ‘dancing pixies’, ‘warriors’, or, as one woman put it, “a coven of witches prowling through the forest, looking for things to go in their cauldron” (field notes 21.09.09). Most of these descriptions refer to nature and stereotypical ‘tribal culture’, which raises interesting questions about the identification of – mostly – urban people with nature and the contemporary ‘spiritual’ notions around it which we have seen in Chapter 3 (see for example Greenwood, 2005; Hanegraaff, 1998; Pearson et al., 1998), and also about the idealisation of tribal societies (Aldred, 2000; Black, 2002; Weaver, 2004).

Although this does not strictly belong to this movement observation, I would like to add some of the dancers’ descriptions of what their movements *felt* like. The internal feeling experience or quality corresponded with the above observations, adding however an interesting dimension of the sensory, sensual and

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happens with everyone facing the same cardinal directions; dancing ‘the Hustle’ (see below) in which everyone faces the same, changing directions; or moving from one end of the hall to the other in rows of threes or fours.

sexual nature of the dance. Besides references to nature and tribal experience, people said things like: “I felt juicy,” “I felt strong, facing male wildness,” “I felt sexy,” “I felt driven and pulsating” (field notes 21.09.09). This suggests that for some, *Movement Medicine* provides an opportunity for safely exploring sensuality, possibly providing an outlet for aspects neglected or repressed in this area. The possibility of accessing different realities in a trance like state through the body and movement (see Hume, 2007) will be explored in Chapter 7.

#### 4.8.2 *Instructions and Exercises*

Movement instructions are usually made to the whole group and whoever feels it is appropriate may apply it.<sup>152</sup> The ‘First Dance’ is often followed by a process called ‘Awakening the Dancer’, leading the dancers through different body parts by suggestions such as “feel your feet”, “become aware of your shoulders”, focussing on this part, then on another.<sup>153</sup> Although there is no prescribed order, a regularly used sequence starts from the spine down to the feet, through the hips, knees and ankles, and from there up to the head, neck, shoulders, and through the arms and elbows out towards the wrists, hands and fingertips. This can even be as specific as “feel your intercostals, the muscles between your ribs” or more poetic “feel the bowl of your hips.” Sometimes the instruction is to focus on two body parts at the same time, such as: “move your feet and your fingers,” making a connection between them. The room seems to come instantly alive when people are asked to focus on any body part, but *especially* the feet. Roth describes this attention as “a point of consciousness moving around inside the field of awareness” (1998: 29). This ‘Awakening the Dancer’ practice seems the first step towards conscious embodiment. As more of the body becomes actively engaged, it comes alive with consciousness.

Another important basic instruction is around spatial awareness (see also Gabrielle Roth, 1998: 27). People are encouraged to create a ‘360° awareness’

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<sup>152</sup> There is rarely any specific personal teaching or instruction. Since 2006 I have, as I recall, received one instruction on the dance floor that was clearly intended just for me (maybe more, which I haven’t taken personally!).

<sup>153</sup> In the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> this is called the ‘body parts meditation’ (see Gabrielle Roth, 1998: 13, 29).

around their bodies, to expand their sensitivity to what may be happening behind them and not only focus on what they can see. Despite the sometimes fast, wild and big movements, there are surprisingly few clashes on the dance floor. Susannah Darling Khan calls this ‘floor craft’ and compares it to moving around skilfully in human traffic (field notes 01.04.09). Mary describes in an interview:

It is like being awake to the safety of your own body and others’ bodies, taking responsibility for yourself. Moving into empty space, and yielding the space to another dancer. Keeping your feet in the pulse of the beat. Awareness of partners with “eyes all over the surface of your skin.” How to give attention to another person. How to maintain your own dance in a partnership. How to listen how to watch, how to play with distance, give space, take space, what ‘witnessing’ means. Following energy without using force (Mary, interview 07.07.08).

This awareness of the use of the space is part of the ‘M.E.S.A.’ work, which is short for the ‘Movement Energetics of Spatial Awareness’. This aims to “bridging the inside and the outside of the body” (field notes 01.04.09), and consists of awareness contracting and expanding, oscillating between an internal and external focus. The ‘micro level’ as the most internal expression of movement, focuses on expression of movement inside the body. This is followed by moving the awareness into the direct space around the body at the ‘medio level’, an awareness of the other dancers and the group at the ‘macro level’ (which is the immediate level of ‘floor craft’), to finally the ‘meta’ level beyond that. The latter focuses on the space outside the dance hall, and the wider field of environment and community and sometimes the divine. An internal focus does not necessarily imply small or slow movements, nor do big movements necessarily indicate a focus on the ‘meta’ level. When done with a partner, this exercise is called the ‘See Saw’. This starts with both persons moving, while having eye contact. One of them will go into his or her own personal space, focussing inwards towards the ‘micro level’, then letting the focus expand, through ‘medio’ to ‘macro’, and back to eye contact with the witness. For a while they move together, then they swap roles (field notes 01.04.09).

Other partner exercises can be included at any time. People are encouraged “to stay with one’s own movement,” and not necessarily mimic the others’ movements or energy, though it is acknowledged that ‘copying’ can be a good possibility to extend one’s personal movement vocabulary, again in order to “find one’s own dance.” Partner exercises often trigger certain processes. People deal with fears of ‘being left out’ at the choosing, or ‘rejection’ at any stage of the dance, with issues of maintaining boundaries, not “giving oneself away” or “losing oneself” while in relationship, as for example expressed by Julia:

That was something I’ve gained through the experience; an ability to stay authentic in company, and that’s a real bonus. I can stay with my own movement, and don’t always have to make it easier for someone else to connect, to help them out, which is probably a tendency I’ve got in my life (Julia, interview 20.06.08).

There is a very thin line between what could be called ‘dance’ and ‘ritual’ exercises, as in many cases they are intertwined. Guided meditations and ‘journeys’ for example, resemble the typical way of shamanic travelling, accompanied by the sound of the drum. These ‘journeys’ can be made while dancing, or while sitting or lying down, although the former is most encouraged to keep participants in their body. Examples of these are the ‘Tree of life Meditation’, a meditation on ‘Acceptance and Intention’, ‘journeys’ through ‘the Four Elements’, ‘The Four Chambers of the Heart’, and to the ‘Wise Elder’. Several exercises can literally be considered as rituals as they follow a prescribed framework or sequence, for example those informed by Bert Hellinger’s ‘Family Constellations’ (see §2.1.5), an approach that makes extensive use of ritualised exercises (Stiefel et al., 2002). Examples of this are two advanced and complex exercises called the ‘Phoenix Process’ and ‘S.E.E.R. Process’ (see §6.4), in which each participant engages with a personal pattern, chosen beforehand. This often includes some explorative writing.

An emerging theme of *Movement Medicine* is the dialogue between the polarities of ‘formlessness’ and ‘form’, or the dichotomy between individuality, diversity, freedom, and autonomy on one hand, and interconnection and unity on

the other (Susannah Darling Khan, newsletters 03.08 and 05.08). There are several exercises that work with this dichotomy.

Repetition, a simple expression of form, is encouraged at times, and not *thinking* about making new movements, but letting movements follow each other up naturally.

In the dance I felt like the scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz*. I was walking on the spot for what felt like 10 or 15 minutes, all my limbs so loose and relaxed, on a long, long journey. It didn't matter if I would arrive or not. The joy was in the journey itself, and in the connection to fellow travellers (Eline, diary 05.03.09).

The dynamic between individuality and unity is encouraged at times by inviting repetitive movement so that people can surrender to a simple shared movement, letting another repetition grow out of the previous one naturally, without having to *think* about making new movements. The aim of this is to “rest in the dance,” to be able to lose and find oneself in the connection with the community, and with “that which guides us” (Susannah Darling Khan, newsletter 09.08). Small groups of usually four dancers may be formed, one of whom will initiate a movement, which will be mirrored for a while by the others. This can be done in a small circle, participants facing each other, or in a line, either side by side or behind one another, the latter allowing easy movement through the space.<sup>154</sup> At other times, the aim is to ‘spontaneously’ have 70% of the dancers doing the same movement at one point, without it being directed or choreographed and independent of the proportion of more or less experienced dancers. Susannah Darling Khan writes about this:

An over-arching intelligence allowed us, for many sweet minutes, to become part of a bigger, self-organising organism, in which patterns came and went, spontaneously interlacing. Every individual had his or her own place, a sense of collective power was balanced with individual responsibility (Susannah Darling Khan, newsletter 12.08).

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<sup>154</sup> A recent addition to this exercise is that in groups of four only three people would copy one dancer's movement while the fourth one would move freely and continued to improvise (field notes 04.02.11).

Furthermore, structure can be created by performing a simple repeating African step in a big circle, called ‘Umbanda’,<sup>155</sup> or in the meditation of ‘feeding the Tree of Life’, which is also done in a circle. Repeated gestures of ‘feeding’ the roots and branches, sometimes accompanied by a song. Finally, in ongoing groups, participants are usually taught ‘the Hustle’,<sup>156</sup> a more complex routine that takes the dancers to face four directions, which is often (spontaneously) started by someone in parties and ceremonies. This can go on for a long time, and the collective steps and changing of directions creates a certain joyous monotony. Finally, there is also a workshop called ‘Party and Prayer’, specifically designed to mix the joy, pleasure and celebration of the dance with prayer and meditation, as in the quotation above. This also features in ceremonies such as ‘The Long Dance’.

#### **4.9 Non-dance activities**

Although dancing is the core activity, there are several other, significant activities during workshops, which form a substantial part of what *Movement Medicine* includes and offers. The two most obvious other ‘ingredients’ of *Movement Medicine* workshops are voice-work and singing on the one hand, and ritual and ritual theatre on the other. Before describing these in detail however, it is important to introduce the concept of ‘support groups’.

##### **4.9.1 Support Groups**

‘Support groups’, also called ‘pods’, are created in the beginning of every intensive workshop through a chance process such as picking beads from a box, or standing in a circle and everyone being given a number, and then finding the people with the same type of bead or number. These will then form a ‘support group’ of usually three or four persons. These will usually gather several times during a workshop and, although not made explicit, meet different objectives besides an organisational

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<sup>155</sup> A contemporary religious movement in Brazil is called ‘Umbanda’, which is rooted in the religions of African slaves (Dann, 1979).

<sup>156</sup> Tim Lawrence describes the Hustle as an “icon of 1970s disco culture” (2009: 199).

structure for certain exercises, such as creating a sense of being accompanied and supported by peers. Usually the ‘pods’ meet as part of a session, although they are sometimes required to meet in between sessions in their own time. The teacher sets the focus of each meeting. Often it simply provides an opportunity to speak about a certain given theme, and for example share and reflect on current experiences, or prepare and/or ask for help for a next step. Sometimes time is set aside for resting, massage, or other forms of physical contact. This is thought to allow the work to ‘integrate’ on another, non-rational level. There is also an often recurrent exercise structure, in which the group members of each ‘pod’ take turns in four different rotating activities: dancing, witnessing the dancer, (creative) writing, and meditating.<sup>157</sup> Finally, the ‘pods’ are often working together in preparation for a ritual or ritual theatre (see below).

#### **4.9.2 Voice-work**

Voice-work and singing exercises such as breathing techniques, loosening the vocal cords and learning and singing songs are strongly integrated in the *Movement Medicine* work. Apart from the assumption that singing is good for the physical body, the heart, the immune system, the hormonal system, as well as for the “emotional being” and “feeling of connectedness” (Susannah Darling Khan, newsletter 09.08), the voice is recognised as a mediator between the inner and outer world, and a means to access deep parts in oneself. It is also related to shamanic healing and the connection to spirit (Susannah Darling Khan, newsletter 07.08).

During most singing exercises people stand together, sometimes in a circle but mostly in a close group, divided by voice range such as (top)sopranos, altos, and basses. New songs are taught by Susannah Darling Khan who generally leads the singing, indicating the melody and rhythm with both her voice and her hands. They often consist of two or four repeating lines, either sung in different parts, or in

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<sup>157</sup> Some people comment on the proportion of dance compared to these other aspects of a workshop as being too little, and not meeting their expectations. This may be a result of the split off from *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> in which relatively much more time is spent dancing. The combination of creative writing, movement, and witnessing is also found in for example Authentic Movement (A. A. Halprin, 2002; D. D. Halprin, 2003; Taylor, 2007).



a round, and sung a cappella, by heart or from a flip chart. The songs often have an ‘ethnic’ character to them, composed in languages such as Xhosa or other African languages, Spanish, Hebrew, or Sanskrit. Themes include for example a call to “never give up,” thanksgiving, celebration, hope for “victory for all people,” and an invocation of ‘Father Sun’. Some songs consist of ‘chakra sounds’ or rhythmic mnemonic syllables such as ‘Ta-ki-ta’, which represent different strokes on the tabla, an Indian percussion instrument. The healing character of sound is acknowledged by encouraging people who cannot join the singing to sit or lie in the middle of the singing group, and let the sound ‘wash’ over them.

Sometimes the group holds a rhythm vocally while others dance to it. During one type of exercise for example, participants are asked to speak a heart rhythm ‘boom boom (– 2 – 3 – 4), boom boom (– 2 – 3 – 4), boom boom (– 2 – 3 – 4); whereby the first ‘boom’ falls on the upbeat and the second ‘boom’ on the first beat. The teacher indicates the other beats through movement. When the rhythm is secure, people can start to move through the space, for instance from one side to the room to the other, while others hold the beat for them. Coming to the other end of the room, they join speaking the rhythm again, so others can dance. About a 2/3 of the group so holds the rhythm while the others get to move. Sometimes this is also done with a more complex rhythm or song.

#### ***4.9.3 Ceremonies and Ritual Theatre***

As we saw in Chapter 3, *Movement Medicine* workshops may include ceremonies that often have an initiatory character. Furthermore, ‘ongoing groups’ often include ‘ritual theatre’, a ritualised presentation for example based on previous personal creative writing, often condensed into a three or four-line poem focussing on a specific theme, inspired by the Japanese poetry tradition of the ‘haiku’. The themes include “relationship with your voice,” future intentions, or a reflection on past, present and future, as in the examples below:

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Looking for a shelter for my Heart I found it within myself Welcoming the Woman, the Goddess within Silvana	I drank a cocktail of good, humble love and crippling fear And here I am: Blessed and bored Becoming motivated, fulfilled, ready! Anon. (male)
I am flying relaxed, One with a mighty host, Unstoppable Margaret	Wide open, tender and soft Winking at the naked, curious girl Reaching the playful estate of being useful Maya
Centered, comfortable, fearless and deeply rooted, My elaborate branches creatively and joyfully harmonised, A bright aligned Tree present Basira	Great Spirit blows Into my instrument Divine music plays when I step aside Sasa
I stand in my vulnerability and my power A voice spoken amidst the silence of those who would suppress us A woman of many faces, I am not alone and I am heard Caroline	Tiny Seed and Butterfly, Taking Time to Grow Dark and Light and Dark and Light; balance Yin and Yang Web of Life continuing, serve the best I can Eline

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*Table 3: Haiku's*

The ritual theatre performance is usually created and prepared in the smaller support groups, and performed after only a short preparation, also in the support group-structure with the other participants as audience. The poems may be spoken out loud, or put on a melody to be sung in front of the group. This is often considered a scary but empowering experience in which one needs to speak in public. It could be compared to speaking New Year's resolutions out loud, increasing the commitment by 'being witnessed', which seems to give it more impulse for taking action accordingly.

Finally, many workshops feature a 'party' of some kind, not only at the end of an ongoing workshop, but also as celebrations during or after ceremonies. At other times they focus on a specific theme as part of the workshop (such as

‘adolescence’ or ‘the return of the Light’). Sometimes the group may (temporarily) be open for outsiders who are not on the workshop.

Chapters 2-5 have outlined the overall background, assumptions, cosmology, structure, tools and framework of *Movement Medicine*, and presented thorough overview of the practice, providing a background to understand the dance experiences and practices described in the further chapters. In Turner’s terminology we have now entered liminal space. What happens in that space will be explored and deepened further in the next three chapters, before we look at the integration of insights and experiences from the dance floor back into daily life in Chapter 8.



## **Intermezzo**

Before we turn, there is time for a little pause...

Yes. This space was deliberately left open and largely un-chartered.  
To breathe. To drink in wide horizons, vast skies and deep lakes, both inside and  
outside. To doodle and dance.



## Chapter 5: On the Body and Embodiment

It took me a long time to come into my body. [The dance] allowed me to know when I'm leaving. It allows me to call myself back. It really has given me a phenomenal knowledge of ways to ground myself into my own roots, into my cells, my breath, my blood and bones and skin, and lungs and heart and kidneys, hair, fingernails, really into the substance of my being and what it feels like. I love my body in a totally different way.

Anonymous, interview 16.06.08

We have explored the territory of *Movement Medicine*. The remaining chapters are structured around areas that participants consider as central to their dance journey, aspects and experiences that the dance has meaningfully contributed to in their lives. One of my first interview questions would be: "Please tell me about key experiences you had on the dance floor." As the practice is used in different ways and fits different purposes this of course varies from person to person. One participant says: "If you want to get an emotional integration, that's okay, if you want to access a spiritual connection, that's okay too. The intention goes with the dance" (Anonymous, interview 04.09.08). When people bring issues to the dance floor consciously, their intention is clear beforehand. They may want to work with specific emotions, or processes, or have an intention to 'heal'. At other times, issues arise spontaneously, brought from the unconscious into consciousness through movement (compare D. Halprin, 2003; Hartley, 1995). It can also be a combination of having a concrete focus, yet not knowing the details, leaving the field open to see what arises. There is a general assumption and 'trust' that "whatever needs attention will present itself" (Caroline, newsletter 04.09).<sup>158</sup>

Despite this variety, certain general areas can be distinguished. The body and embodiment play an important role as starting point of all *Movement Medicine* work, which will be discussed in this chapter. Chapter 6 looks at working with emotions, patterns and stories, and the dynamic between self and other. Chapter 7 describes spiritual experiences and Chapter 8 will discuss the integration of the

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<sup>158</sup> This is similar to beliefs in New Age approaches to healing and alternative therapies such as cranio-sacral therapy, which often assume that the system knows what to heal. It is sometimes called "working with the top card."

workshops back into daily life. First however, we turn to peoples' relationships with their bodies as ground for experiences, their ideas and perceptions of the body, and the process and advantages they describe regarding becoming 'more embodied'.

## **5.1 Perceptions of the body**

### **5.1.1 *Body image***

Bodily perceptions and images vary greatly among participants. They include having a positive or neutral body image, as well as perceiving the body as something problematic, unwanted, or even as enemy. People in the latter category often display a very low self-esteem that for some has led to self-harm and eating disorders, treating the body as a thing or object that is subjected to overindulgence, control or punishment. Overall, people with a negative body image initially feel reluctant to dance and worry about being judged by others. In *Movement Medicine* they realise after a while that "no one is looking" and therefore the fear of being judged subsides. People also speak about the influence of the mind and thinking patterns on the body, and that when habitual thoughts are changed, a different relationship with the body (usually more loving and enjoyable) becomes possible. There is a close relationship between the body and the experience of identity, even though this is not always conscious. The dance allows participants to play with and express gender notions, emphasising both the person's own and the other gender. We will now have look at some of *Movement Medicine* practitioners' shared notions about the body and at how they influence the dance experience.

### **5.1.2 *The body as a Storehouse***

The most common, implicit assumption of participants with regard to the body can be summarised by the metaphor of the body as storehouse of emotions, memory and trauma. Experiences, both pleasurable and difficult, can somehow be 'held' in the body, either at an abstract 'cellular level' or in concrete body parts. People



speak for example about feeling “rage in their thighs,” or “sadness in their arms,” as in the examples below:

I do sometimes feel rage in my thighs [touches thighs gently]. I do actually feel it. If I focus on my thighs, I can feel Rage, I can feel the pent up anger that is locked there. Other parts of my body have other things stored. When I put my hands on my arms [does so], there is still a sense of sadness in my arms, about reaching out and not being sure that can I be met.

Julia, interview 20.06.08

When you move the body, and become fluid, you can find wisdom in your left arm, or your right shoulder. You feel emotions in certain places in your body and with that comes the maturity to be able to process these emotions and deal with them, and that’s really important for me.

‘The Long Dance’ participant (male), 07.10<sup>159</sup>

These quotations show a direct relationship between emotions and their expression in the physical substance of the body. In this respect people sometimes translate their experiences into Reich’s concepts of ‘body patterning’ and ‘body armour’ (see f.e. Conger, 2005; D. Halprin, 2003; Meekums, 2002; Taylor, 2007). They also assume that the psyche and emotions can influence the body’s posture, and that this in turn can influence their life view and emotions. People recognise that when they change their posture, their view and outlook on life changes in a similar way. For example, one woman explains her slightly forward bent spine through her longing to make contact with people (Anonymous, interview 22.11.07). Another woman describes how she always used to sit with a straight back, her legs together and her hands across them. This had the effect on her that it kept her ‘rigid’, ‘small’, and “out of the way,” so that other people would not notice and possibly criticise her. Through moving she found a freedom from what she calls “learned social behaviour,” and now she is able to sit and behave how she likes (Julia, interview 20.06.08).

The relationship between psyche, emotions and the body is also fundamental in body oriented therapies such as body-mind centering (B. B. Cohen,

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<sup>159</sup> Transcription of the short movie on ‘The Long Dance’, July 2010, made by Ben Cole: [http://web.me.com/bencole/Ben\\_Cole\\_Cinematography\\_web\\_site/The\\_Long\\_Dance.html](http://web.me.com/bencole/Ben_Cole_Cinematography_web_site/The_Long_Dance.html), accessed September 22, 2010.

1993; Hartley, 1995: 106), Feldenkrais (D. Halprin, 2003), Gestalt therapy (Woldt & Toman, 2005), Dance Movement Psychotherapy (Meekums, 2002; Penfield, 2001) and Authentic Movement (Taylor, 2007). That *Movement Medicine* participants advocate these assumptions and professional jargon is not so surprising. Firstly, as we have seen in Chapters 2 and 3, these views are woven tightly into the language of *Movement Medicine*, the teaching instructions, exercises and frame of reference (see also Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 90-1). Secondly, many participants are themselves working in the field of body-oriented therapy.

Participants furthermore assume that any trauma, blocks or unhelpful body patterns in this ‘storehouse’ can be accessed, moved, ‘unblocked’ and ‘healed’ through movement and dance, and that the body’s intelligence knows what to heal next. Bringing awareness to it is considered as one step, putting it in motion is another step towards release and healing, for which it is not necessary to be able to ‘formulate’ what is going on (Jo, interview 22.05.08; Tim, interview 09.12.08).

Suddenly, a simple movement, like I was here, or was here, or was here [points at different places on her body: legs, elbows, belly] or was here, moving that. I realised that the pain was there. The block was there. Simply moving it, I was able to liberate that blockage.

So all the pain that was there, in my body, in very specific parts of my body, suddenly I was like, with this kind of pain, crying, but then it was like a big transformation for me, because I was really able to transform that pain in love. Okay, you can get out from here [from the pain, EK], and not only that, this can become the other side. Suddenly, it was like, the pain was still there, but the love was also there. Both is becoming like one (...). I was really feeling I’ve been opening blocks. It was the opening of blocks of energy, and that shifting with the pain. “Okay, I’m acknowledging this, I’m able to transform this.”

Paloma, interview 24.11.07

It appears to be an opening or liberation of ‘energy blocks’ that shifts the pain, as well as a transmutation from pain into love. The pain can be transformed or absorbed by the love that is also recognised as present in the body. This ‘transformation’ can be perceived as “being born again,” and as “another way of living life” (Paloma, interview 24.11.07). This change of perspective, which Paloma describes as “becoming friends with the pain,” invites a state of non-

duality, where pain and love were experienced as one and the same substance, the substance of self.

### ***5.1.3 The Intelligence of the Body***

People recognise certain intelligence in the body, which in some cases they consider trust worthier than their rational knowledge. This does not only refer to the mechanistic ‘knowing’ of the body, which causes the heart to beat, which regulates body temperature and so on, but also to intuitive knowing.

My body knows everything, and maybe my mind does, but my mind censors what it tells the rest of me, whereas my body is always honest, always clear, always right. Makes it painful to listen to sometimes, but I never regret it.

Lunar, interview 15.11.08

Some people call it ‘gut feelings’, others describe it in more of an energetic sense, and is often used to base decisions on:

The energetics are really clear: if something is good, my body gets all excited, and my heart is expanding, and I really feel like “oh wow!” When I’m doing things that are wrong for me, I get exhausted, almost depressed, I can’t get out of bed. I haven’t had that for quite a while now, because I’m really more in tune. My body won’t allow me to ignore this. It makes it impossible to do things that aren’t right for me now. It really demands me to hear it.

Julia, interview 20.06.08

If I look back at my life, at decisions that I had to make, I just get this gut feeling about something; I shouldn’t walk down that street, or I need to talk to that person but I don’t know why, recognising you when I’d never met you before, there is like a registering of that in the body. It’s not a mind thing as in the chattering, “oh shall I put 1 sugar or 2 in my coffee”, or “I need to go to the loo,” not *that* ‘mind’. But like knowing “this is right for me, and that isn’t.”

Elloa, interview 15.11.09

Coming in to my body and finding out what it’s about, getting more information from it, is a skill that once you’ve got it, there is a lot of information there. And it makes me feel bigger, more expansive, I get more

sense, more information about myself through my body and allowing it to move.

Tim, interview 09.12.08

Emily Wilcox, a medical anthropologist who worked with contemporary dancers in France, describes how the learning of bodily techniques includes the “repeated practice of an action,” so that the behaviour “becomes a natural part of the person’s instinctive repertoire; it is embodied at an unconscious level” (Wilcox, 2005: 134). When the actions take place without mental effort, the intuition takes over. The value of repetition in the learning process is recognised by both participants and teachers (for example Julia, interview 20.06.08). *Movement Medicine* offers a place where people can practice with new skills, as we will see in more detail in Chapter 6. One of the assets of this is the process of becoming more embodied, which helps getting access to the wisdom or intuitive information stored in the body. This will be discussed in the second part of this chapter.

#### ***5.1.4 Dancing with physical pain and illness***

Aside from dancing being a joyful experience in many cases, the dance can be a place to follow and explore pain and illness in contrast to daily life where other things ask for attention. Rather than a mere awareness of it, the dance can create an active relationship with pain and illness. Some people experience a ‘journey’ into their cells, muscles, bones and tissue, skin and blood, lungs, heart, and other organs, and even down to their hair and fingernails. Sometimes this is addressed specifically in exercises such as ‘Awakening the Dancer’. Through this, people feel their cells become more ‘alive’ and ‘awake’, and some believe that their cellular structure can be changed, and that ‘destructive codes in the cells’ can be ‘neutralised’, as for example described by Annette:

In the dance I feel an awaking of my cells. The continuous invitation to let my awareness move with the body is freeing, transforming the cellular structure, formed by old pattern and personal histories. Movement energizes my body; awareness connects my mind and feelings with the body. Destructive codes in the cells become neutralized. The dance is calling the soul into the body. Annette, newsletter 04.07

This view is also expressed in the theory behind body-mind centering. According to Hartley, cells, body tissue and fluids have a ‘mind’ which is “expressed in feeling states, posture, and movement patterns” (Hartley, 1995: 113). When there are patterns of holding or blockages, “the movement of the mind within the afflicted body area must change in order to allow the habitual holding to be freed. Contacting and working with the tissues at the cellular level can facilitate such change in mind-body patterns” (Hartley, 1995: 113). One of the informants, a woman who has been HIV and Hepatitis C positive for 18 years at the time of the interview, works very specifically with the health in her cells, communicating with them and listening to what they ‘need’ (Anonymous, interview 04.09.08). Contrary to all advice she never took any medication.<sup>160</sup> When, after 17 years, she started to suffer from a low immune system, uterus and thyroid problems, she realised “something was going on and I didn’t know what. I was very confused, very scared about what I was feeling” (ibid.). Again, rather than taking medication, she gave up her job, started a practice of “speaking with her body,” and danced more intensively. At the time of the interview, a year later, she was waiting for test results on her immune system, but her thyroid and uterus were fine (Anonymous, interview 04.09.08). For her the journey with the four elements:

... allows me to sail in the cells of my body, and give me the opportunity to wake up pieces of my DNA, to get information there, and to create an opportunity to clear up what’s going on there that’s not working in the right way, to create a stronger and more elastic membrane of the cell. The elements teach me how to sail in the cells, because the cells are made of elements. So it’s just a matter of listening, not with the ear, but with the heart and the body.

*Can you say more about how your DNA speaks to you, or what sort of information you get from it?*

It’s not a rational way of communication. It’s allowing myself to be in the process. I work with intention. For instance working with the fire, what I have to do is when I go in an unknown part of the cell, if I bring fire with me, the fire brings light, so suddenly I can see what’s going on, I can feel it, and like tuning the cell with the information coming from the upper world, or anywhere from the light.

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<sup>160</sup> She did not fully know why, but she just could not do it: “It was my soul, asking to do something different.” She is convinced that “If I was just believing what other people were saying about my viruses, I think that probably I was already dead” (Anonymous, interview 04.09.08).

*And do you consciously bring new information to your cells as well?*

Everything is there, is already there. In some way it's like breaking down old belief systems and just allow what is already there to be there, and to make myself in resonance with the revealed information. And what I can say is, it's the body that's teaching me. The only thing that I try to do is to try to be not too much in the mind.

(...)

And the main thing you do in this practice is to speak to your body. To ask questions, and to listen to the answers. To do this with your virus, and with the different systems in the body, getting information there. And then it becomes clear in which way you go against yourself. That was a big lesson. (...) I surrender myself to my body, or I try to. The first step was to take the responsibility of where I was and where I am, and to go through these fears. They were very big, speaking with my fears, they are killing me, and then decide to face them.

Anonymous, interview 04.09.08

The first tentative results of research investigating the effect of “mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) meditation programs” on HIV are promising (Creswell et al., 2009), although it is recognised that more research is necessary. The authors also report positive effects of these meditation programs for cancer patients in other studies (ibid.). A quick online search through patient support websites,<sup>161</sup> shows that meditation and communicating with the virus or cancer cells are encouraged practices to increase mental and emotional stability and stress reduction, but also to slow down the diseases' progress. This case is therefore not unique to *Movement Medicine*, although the practice provides a framework to enter into dialogue with the illness through dance and visualisation.

Ruth landed in hospital for nine weeks after a severe accident, five of which she remained on the Intensive Care ward. She was unable to move, yet the *visualisation of moving* different parts of her body gave her a ‘holding structure’. This helped her to face her fear, and made her feel “grounded and secure,” connected and relaxed. In her imagination, she ‘danced’ her blood, bones and cells,

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<sup>161</sup> For example (all accessed February 8, 2012):

<http://www.cancer.org/Treatment/TreatmentsandSideEffects/ComplementaryandAlternativeMedicine/MindBodyandSpirit/meditation>,

<http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/treatment/complementary-alternative/therapies/meditation>,

<http://www.thebody.com/content/art30480.html>,

<http://www.davidpatient.com/pages/long-term-survivor.html>.

and through that got a better understanding of “the internal landscape” of her body. Then, a year and a half later, during the first workshop she attended after the accident, she was able to revisit the moment of the accident, and the time of hospitalisation. The dance then became a place of coming to terms with it and of gratitude:

To be able to dance it, and name it, and weep it, and cry it, and be thankful for my life and my breath. (...) It was a place of processing it all, almost quite consciously, and that was a real gift to be able to do that.

Ruth, interview 04.03.09

Even though we cannot measure or characterise scientifically the physical effects of dancing on reduction of pain or illness, the dance allows people to place their experience of it in another framework, and hence find a more empowered way to cope with their situation.

## 5.2 Perceptions of embodiment and disembodiment

‘Embodiment’ is a much debated, complex and multi-faceted concept. In this section, participants’ perceptions of embodiment and disembodiment will be discussed. In the interview- and newsletter data roughly four different understandings or expressions of embodiment can be recognised, which I will call ‘awareness’ (or ‘interoception’), ‘alignment’, ‘presence’ and ‘connection’. They are not mutually exclusive, but show different tendencies, which are also discernable in discourse on embodiment.

Before we continue, it is important to distinguish between the epistemological and ontological use of the term ‘embodiment’. Ontologically the term refers to having a body and living in a body, i.e. being located somewhere in place and time, which profoundly influences our experience, and in this sense we are of course *always* embodied.<sup>162</sup> Epistemologically however, embodiment refers

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<sup>162</sup> Compare Adrian Harris on on <http://www.thegreenfuse.org/embodiment/> accessed on January 27, 2009, see also Harris (2008).

to a person's awareness of this fact. We can say someone is "not in their body," or 'disembodied', meaning "their awareness is not focused on their body" (de Quincey, personal communication, 22.06.08).<sup>163</sup> This shows a parallel with the distinction Maurice Merleau-Ponty, one of the foremost thinkers about embodiment, made between the *objective* (physical) body, and the *phenomenal body* as we experience the physical body, and with which we experience the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1968). I will use the term embodiment mainly in the epistemological sense, focusing on the phenomenal body and its role in our experiences.

### 5.2.1 Awareness or 'Interoception'

One of the things mentioned most frequently is an increased and growing awareness of internal physical, emotional and mental processes. It concerns a "bringing into awareness" of something that was previously dormant or unconscious, or a quietening down of the 'mental chatter' of daily life, to 'listen in' to what is going on inside (compare Gendlin, 1996: 19).

I think that everyone has particular 'channels' or 'aspects' of awareness (...). It's almost as if it's a skill to develop and to deepen, where you just notice what's there. And quite a lot of stuff is there, if we just start to pay attention. If I open myself up to awareness, I start to notice things, which are there all the time but unless I make myself available and aware, then they don't come into consciousness. (...). Then noticing what the reaction is in the body, and then just allowing that to start to move.

Tim, interview 09.12.08

In the Life/Art process developed by Anna Halprin and her daughter Daria Halprin three levels of awareness, physical, emotional and mental or associative (containing imagery, association, conscious reflection) are included individually in the focus of the work, recognising however that they cannot really be separated. They point out that it can be misleading to categorise dance as simply physical,

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<sup>163</sup> De Quincey suggests to furthermore distinguish between: 'Phenomenological' and 'Philosophical' notions of embodiment. Phenomenological notions tend to provide experiential descriptions, whereas philosophical notions tend to provide abstract conceptual analyses of embodiment (de Quincey, personal communication, 22.06.08).



because it provides the key to and connection between all three levels (D. Halprin, 2003).

The understanding of the processes that happen within the physicality of a body is the focus of many different disciplines and therapies, each using different terms to indicate this. Although people's awareness of their internal physical, emotional and mental processes may seem obvious, it cannot be taken for granted (Gendlin, 1996: 18; D. Halprin, 2003: 30). This awareness seems to be a very fundamental asset, which creates a foundation for other experiences. Within *Movement Medicine* it receives much attention, especially at the 'micro level' of the 'M.E.S.A.' exercise, and through the concept called 'interoception' (introduced in Chapter 4). This term from neuroscience refers both to the concrete physiological feedback of bodily functions and activities, and to people's *perception* of that feedback (Cameron & Hamilton, 2002: vii; Wiens, 2005). So although it is located within the body, it includes and is strongly intertwined with "higher mental processes such as emotion, conscious awareness, and behavior (with or without awareness)" (Cameron, 2001: 697). In other words: "The system of interoception as a whole constitutes 'the material me' and relates to how we perceive feelings from our bodies that determine our mood, sense of well-being and emotions" (C. J. Fowler, 2003: 1506). Experiences such as 'gut reactions' and 'heartache' are also classified as 'interoception' (Cameron & Hamilton, 2002: viii). Connecting body, brain, behaviour, thought and the rational mind (Cameron, 2001: 708), 'interoception' is psychosomatic, yet also touches on neurophilosophy "because awareness of the body is basic to consciousness of self" (Cameron, 2001: 708). Although interoceptivity can happen outside of awareness, Cameron & Hamilton observe that it is closely related (2002: 6). All these concepts are relevant for the experience of *Movement Medicine*.

A term used more frequently by participants to describe this inner awareness, is 'felt sense'. This is part of a psychotherapeutic method called 'Focussing', mapped by Eugene Gendlin when looking for variables that influenced the success rate of psychotherapy. Although there seem to be similarities between 'interoception' and 'felt sense', Gendlin does not comment on them. More than the therapist's intervention, the success rate was related to a

specific skill or behaviour of the client, which appeared easy to learn when not naturally there. The ‘felt sense’ refers to “a body-sense of meaning,” often unclear and ‘fuzzy’ at first, which can come into awareness and can also change. It is not the same as an emotion, which is usually recognised (Gendlin, 1978: 10). Gendlin describes similarities and differences between the ‘felt sense’ and Jung’s four functions (sensation, feeling, intuition and thought). The ‘felt sense’ is none of these, and yet may be “a specific kind of each of the four.” The ‘felt sense’ is more akin to Jung’s fifth, ‘transcendent’, function (ibid.: 66). His assumption that having a ‘felt sense’ helps one to become oneself more deeply (ibid.: 21) will be relevant in later sections.

Without trying to be exhaustive, other concepts that relate to this phenomenon are for example Damasio’s ‘feeling brain’ and ‘somatic markers’ (2004), ‘somatic mind’ (Fleckenstein, 1999), somatosensory awareness (Sondra Fraleigh, 2000), ‘body knowledge’ and ‘bodily intelligence’ (Grau, 1995). It is evident that there are many different terms for closely related concepts, which seems to me a response to the importance of what these terms convey for understanding our human experience.

### ***5.2.2 Alignment: body, heart, mind and spirit***

While there may be *awareness* of physical, emotional and mental processes, these internal observations can still be isolated from one another: one can merely register some pain in the toe, a distraction in the mind or sadness in the heart (or in any body part) without sense of connection between those experiences. *Movement Medicine* participants observe that an integrated connection between body, heart and mind is not obvious at all. Using the inner awareness or process of ‘interoception’ described above, they are alerted to experiences of neglect or over-emphasis of certain parts, or of disconnectedness between them. The over-emphasis usually relates to the mental (thought) processes, while the neglect tends to be more in the emotional area. When experiencing a tendency of “being in the head only,” i.e. an over-emphasis on the mind, the process of ‘alignment’ is

expressed in most cases as a top down descent from the head to the rest of the body:

Just to move the focus away from what's going on in my head to what's going on in my hands instead, and in my feet, and in my breathing. So I bring my awareness from my head to my body, and then seeing what naturally emerges.

Rachel, interview 18.11.08

Some people speak of a 'struggle' with their head, and a necessity of putting "my head to one side for a minute, getting out of my head, get back in my body" (Elloa, interview 15.11.09). One can question to what extent this language seems to reinforce the disconnection again, now on behalf of the body rather than of the mind. This may be an effect of the embracing of the Eastern "no mind principle" in many alternative learning environments, including in the way Ya'Acov and Susannah Darling Khan taught earlier on in their career (Susannah Darling Khan, interview 23.10.2008). This trend encourages people to escape from the mind, and to not think.

Participants also describe a separation from their heart and a repression of emotions and feelings. Almost as if it is unsafe to allow the heart access to the body, the inclusion of feelings that have been conditioned to be denied or repressed, such as anger, fear sadness, is too undeveloped and therefore often too uncomfortable to contemplate (compare Watson, 2008: 86). Learning and practicing tools to deal with emotions in a healthy and non-destructive way is part of the 'alignment'. This will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Besides body, heart and mind, participants mention a fourth aspect or dimension with regarding to the alignment, which they call 'soul', 'spirit', 'higher self' or 'consciousness'. This fourth, 'spiritual' level 'beyond words' is also recognised by Anna and Daria Halprin, and is linked to and simultaneously imbuing the physical, emotional, mental levels (D. Halprin, 2003: 105; Worth & Poynor, 2004: 59-60). These levels have to work together in order to cultivate spiritual awareness (D. Halprin, 2003: 105). The body can be seen as channel or avenue through which 'higher levels of consciousness' (ibid.) or our 'spirit/soul'

(Hume, 2007: 139) work. The Darling Khans do not consider the soul as coming from outside, but rather “as a challenge we are given to weave together these different aspects into one whole, one soul, which then naturally finds itself in communication and communion with the Great Spirit” (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 84). This alignment, which receives attention in the first three gateways of the mandala and especially in Susannah Darling Khan’s ongoing group the ‘Journey of Empowerment’, is also referred to as creating “a bowl for the soul” (Ya’Acov Darling Khan, field notes 23.06.07). The experience of dancing with these intangible concepts of soul and spirit is discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

As said before, most participants experience this alignment first of all as a top-down process from the head to the body. A conscious effort is made to draw thoughts and thinking patterns as well as emotions and feelings ‘down’ into the body, and there, feeling their quality, texture, impact and force. Christian de Quincey however suggests a ‘bottom up approach’ (personal communication 22.06.08), by “letting feelings rise up” into thoughts. According to him, this would work better because thinking is a mental process of generating abstractions (models, systems, descriptions, analyses) taken from experience. To a certain extent the thought or idea by then “has lost contact with its origin in embodied feeling.” The ‘top down approach’ as experienced by most participants, aims at reconnecting these abstractions with the body in which they originated. De Quincey compares this with “putting shards of coloured glass together to make a [stained-glass] window.” No matter how beautiful the window is “this will always be a far cry from the clear transparency of embodied experience itself” (de Quincey, personal communication 22.06.08). The ‘bottom up approach’ de Quincey suggests as an alternative, includes a:

continuity with the wholeness of the embodied experience, (...) even when only parts or aspects of this experience get expressed in words and ideas. (...) Once fragmented, wholeness can never be fully restored. Fragments cannot form a seamless whole. However, a whole always contains all its elemental parts, and through shifts of attention we can focus on specific elements of the whole experience, which we can then express in language and thought. (...) *feeling our thinking* (...) means paying attention to the *process* of the arising of thoughts from ongoing felt experience—*prior to*

*disconnection and fragmentation*” (de Quincey, personal communication 22.06.08, author’s emphasis).

The ‘top down approach’ shows certain parallels with the western assumptions of training proceeding from mind to body, while the ‘bottom up approach’ is more similar to Eastern views which aim to “affect, train and transform the mind through the body” (Watson, 2008: 74). However, depending on which of the three modalities (body, heart or mind) is most active and depending on each specific situation, I would argue that the alignment of these modalities is a two way process, sometimes going up, sometimes down. This is also reflected in peoples’ gestures to indicate this alignment process, their hands moving both up and down to indicate movement or connection between parts. It is also in agreement with biochemical research on the mutually influencing mechanisms of physical and mental states, which demonstrates “that the traffic between body and mind is not merely one-way” (Watson, 2008: 84).

### **5.2.3 Presence: being ‘in’ rather than ‘out’**

Besides speaking of “becoming aligned with soul or spirit” as mentioned above, participants furthermore describe the experience of “becoming infused with” their own spirit or soul. Through their increased awareness, they start to notice an initial absence of, or disconnection from, ‘something’ vital, ‘something’ important, the loss of which is sorely felt once the person becomes aware of it. ‘Presence’ and its opposite ‘absence’ or ‘disconnection’ are frequently referred to and seems one of the issues that receives most attention. Many participants describe that they are somehow ‘divorced’ from their body, and use words and phrases such as ‘leaving’ or ‘having left their bodies’, ‘feeling disconnected’, ‘lost touch with it’, ‘being zombified’, ‘hovering’, and ‘out’.<sup>164</sup> To indicate this, people gesture with their arms over their heads, suggesting that “somewhere out there” is where they experience themselves when they feel disembodied. Some participants experience a *permanent* state of disembodiment, for others it only happens *temporarily* at

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<sup>164</sup> In the next chapter we will look more closely at the shamanic concept of ‘soul loss’, which has also been mentioned briefly in Chapters 2 and 3.

specific moments, for example when experiencing strong emotions. For some ‘leaving’ happens almost unnoticed, for others quite violently or forcefully, as illustrated by phrases such as “shooting out of my body” (Anonymous, interview 12.01.09).

When awareness of ‘leaving’ or ‘absence’ is growing, the next step is to monitor when that happens. Not everyone always realises it, as someone says: “It sometimes just happens that I’m no more there” (Anonymous, interview 04.09.08). Mieke explains:

Dancing helps me recognise those moments better: “When am I where?” And slowly but surely I’ve decided: “I stay in.” I notice that I am still absent every now and then, out of my body, but I can return faster and more easily.

Mieke, interview 26.04.08

Subsequently, people start to look for the reason for their ‘leaving’ and have their own understanding of when and how this happens. These explanations roughly fall into three categories. Firstly, this type of disembodiment is understood as coping mechanism to deal with strong emotions (Elloa, interview 15.11.09) and the reality of life. Some people experience the world and life as overwhelming and frightening, like Mieke:

Somehow being in touch with life and other people is so scary for me that I often feel I hover outside of my body [draws a circle in the air with her hand, EK], rather than in my body.

Mieke, interview 26.04.08

Others, like Julia, feel uncomfortable with “being in a human form” which she experienced as “harsh, unfair, like an assault on my senses.” As a child she escaped in “a dream world, a fantasy world,” and when she got older, for the same reason, she took up meditation and shamanic journeying, which resulted in “not being in her body very much.” Part of her sought “to escape into [her] dreams and inner landscape” (Julia, interview 20.06.08). This notion is also mentioned by others, for example by Caroline Carey in the book that describes her dance and life journey with *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> and *Movement Medicine* (Carey, 2010).

Secondly, some participants describe a problematic relationship with their bodies, for example after a history of eating disorders and/or self-harm. The body has become a thing unwanted and hated and the last thing they want is to “hang out there.” Elloa for example describes her struggles with self-hatred and low self-esteem resulting in and amplified by anorexia and binge eating. She lost the ability to listen to her body:

I’m kind of divorced from my body in a way. I spent years objectifying it, and turning it into a thing. (...). My body has been my enemy for so long. It’s been this *thing* that I hate! I used to self-harm as well. I want to get rid of bits of me. I want to cut bits of my body off. (...) I don’t have a history of trusting my body. I don’t have that kind of relationship with it. If your body is in pain, it’s telling you that something isn’t quite right. But I just had such a violent relationship with my body for so many years, like the binging for example, [until I couldn’t] stand up straight, because my stomach was so full, just because of how much food I put into myself. That ability to be intuitive or listen is what I’m completely divorced from.

Elloa, interview 15.11.09<sup>165</sup>

Another woman explains the connection between overeating and “the out-of-touchness with the feelings in my body” as a vicious circle. Having no other way of expressing her feelings she started over-eating, and through eating too much, she lost touch with her body, overriding its natural needs and appetite. The natural mechanisms of knowing when food is needed, or indeed, when to stop eating, is blocked in this cycle, and the capacity to listen to the body is lost (Anonymous, interview 20.11.08).

The third ‘cause’ for “losing contact with the body” and “neglecting the body” is attributed to rigid (transcendental) meditation practice and ‘spiritual searching’ in which, according to these participants, “knowing the body” was not considered important. Through dancing they were able to restore that contact,

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<sup>165</sup> At the moment of the interview, in January 2009, she still struggled with her fourteen-year history with these issues. In her diary she comments on small victories such as breaking the habit of buying a chocolate bar after a dance class. However, in July 2010, after an intense journey with dancing, she says: “Parts of me that I thought I had to lock away I’m learning to unleash. And I’m discovering they’re not so poisonous after all.” The inclusion of the previously ‘unwanted’ bits gave her a sense of freedom and happiness that she had not known before.

sometimes instantaneously just by simply moving the body, sometimes taking several months (Mirjam, interview 22.11.07; Paloma, interview 24.11.07).

Through the experiences participants are, over time, able to recognise this disconnection and to start to remedy it. The exercise of ‘Awakening the Dancer’ is considered as a useful instrument to get back into the body. Finding the way “back home to the body,” often simply starts with “finding the feet,” as Mary states:

First thing is finding my feet. It’s a way of coming to ground. Sometimes that’s the main thing that happens when I go to an evening class. That’s really, really helpful, and then I’m very, very content with simply that, just being brought home into the body.

Mary, interview 07.07.08

‘Staying in’ requires discipline, commitment, continuous affirmation and choice. In short, it is considered quite hard work (Sanderyn, newsletter 01.08). Elloa for example describes a commitment to stay with whatever is arising and to keep moving, especially when the emotions are so strong that they ‘paralyse’ her (interview 15.11.09). Someone else compares it to training or education and also indicates a continuous choice for staying in the body:

If I (say) I stay, I stay, I stay, I stay, I stay, that I can’t go away anymore. (...) It’s a sort of education, a training to stay in. For the soul to take space. But I can’t tell you more about it, I’m exploring it still at the moment. Because inside, there is a universe, small, even if it’s dense in material.

Anonymous, interview 04.09.08

#### **5.2.4 Connection: interaction between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’**

The last expression of embodiment is intersubjective, an experience happening in the relationship between the interior of the body and exterior of the outer world, which mutually influence each other. Julia describes it as follows: “Our body is our Earth connection and through it we can become conscious of the messages of the natural world and its inhabitants” (newsletter, 12.07). Participants see a strong connection with self as a prerequisite for a healthy connection with other people. A dialogue with the outside world starts first of all with the integrity of the physical



self, while at the same time, the outside context is what defines self and identity (compare Csordas, 1993; Fleckenstein, 1999). Embodiment in this sense is an ongoing traffic between inward and outward-going movements, “a complex weaving of the ‘out there’ and the ‘in here,’ in all of the body, not just in the head, of movement, emotion, visceral senses, bodily intuition, entwining with thoughts, theories, philosophy to provide a new ontological and epistemological perspective” (Boyd, 2007: 65). Christian de Quincey talks about the intersubjective nature of embodiment:

While embodiment is essentially a *subjective* experience, it is equally *intersubjective*: The “felt sense of embodied habitation” is augmented or amplified with increased awareness that one’s body is always a node in a matrix of interdependent relationships with all other bodies—from one’s closest neighbor [sic] to, ultimately, the entire universe (de Quincey, personal communication 16.04.09).

Among *Movement Medicine* participants, there is a strong awareness that the interior and exterior are linked and that if the one changes, the other will be affected too.<sup>166</sup> This awareness is strengthened with the ‘M.E.S.A.’ work, which aims at “bridging the inside and the outside of the body” (field notes 01.04.09), by contracting and expanding between the ‘micro’, ‘medio’, ‘macro’ and finally ‘meta levels of awareness’. As we have seen, *Movement Medicine* underlines that the four elements exist both inside and outside of the human body (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 21). Furthermore, the concept of ‘interoception’ gives an indication for the level of empathy and awareness for others (interview Susannah Darling Khan 23.10.08 and Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 93). I consider what the lady below calls “the inner and outer [being] in balance” as a good example of this expression of embodiment:

The integrity with my cells and my bones and my movement out of my cells, is my very important responsibility in this life. So I don’t allow anybody anymore to step into this circle of my physical integrity. And that’s it. So if this is my holy, physical matter, ‘Material’, for me it is like

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<sup>166</sup> This is also recognised in writings on New Age (Prince & Riches, 2000), magic (Greenwood, 2000), and dance (A. Halprin, 1995).

an inner marriage to have the contact with my inner, inner physicality, and to be really aware of my inner body, and to be aware of how this body is in its' environment and how it is aware of this outer environment, and to be in a dialogue where inner and outer is in balance, and there is no infringement/interference.

Anonymous, interview 22.11.07

In this sense, embodiment is clearly not only about the body but also “about culture and experience insofar as these can be understood from the standpoint of bodily being-in-the-world” (Csordas, 1999: 143). Kristie Fleckenstein, following Gregory Bateson, uses the concept of the ‘somatic mind’ (1999), which seems useful to further discuss the intersubjectivity of embodiment. She illustrates this with an example of a woman in a wheel chair, whose identity cannot be separated from her disability nor her environment. When she for example struggles to enter a door, from the concept of ‘somatic mind’, her identity is simultaneously made up by the body, the chair and the doorway (Mairs, 1996, in Fleckenstein, 1999: 288). Identity and “being-in-a-material-place” are continually formed and reformed, and always consist of “location *plus* being” (Fleckenstein, 1999: 286, her emphasis). Identity can be considered as an emergent process, which is socially construed in relationship to context and environment (Fleckenstein, 1999: 287). This is also observed by Shusterman: “Self-representation and experience are intimately connected, while the logic of complementarity demonstrates that ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ reciprocally constitute and contain each other” (Shusterman, 2000: 159). With regard to the direction of this expression of embodiment, (inter)connection is not so much a vertical process like the other two, but more an ongoing traffic between inward and outward-going movements.

### **Concluding remarks: the effects and advantages of embodiment**

Embodiment is first of all considered a starting point for new personal experiences and for ‘manifesting’ things in life. It creates a physical, concrete relation with the outer world, without which ideas and plans cannot come into the “world of matter” (Julia, interview 20.06.08). Many speak of the joy and delight that embodiment

brings, a full experience of the senses as it enables one to appreciate the aliveness that is surging through the body (Hans A., interview 26.04.08). Furthermore, according to participants, embodiment enhances clarity and definition because of the ability to distinguish what is “from the mind” and what is “from the emotions.” This discernment enables clear decision making which benefits both the person and their surroundings (Rachel, interview 18.11.08). In turn, this often leads to improved relationships with other people. Through embodiment, which feels like “inhabiting the body better” and “feeling comfortable in one’s skin,” participants are able to socialise with others in a very ‘present’ way, which gives them more access to themselves and henceforth more availability to the others (Anonymous, interview 20.11.08). And finally, although it can equally be seen as an effect of healing, embodiment is seen as the place where ‘healing’ starts. Fleckenstein states that embodiment is necessary for change, transformation, meaning, and being, all of which require agency. Without the body as anchor, there is nothing there to change (Fleckenstein, 1999: 284-5). Shusterman (2000) also reflects the body as safe place, as anchor. He considers the body as personal reference point in a “rapidly changing and increasingly baffling world” (Shusterman, 2000: 162). Our bodies form a ground for personal identity because they “are always with us” (ibid.), despite all else that maybe changing. One of the key aims of his theory of ‘experiential somatics’ “is to *ground* the body, giving it a firm sense of contact and stable support from the earth so that it can afford that same sense of support to one’s personality” (ibid.: 162, italics in original). This is exactly what is encouraged and practiced in *Movement Medicine*. Bodies and embodiment seem to be the prerequisite before shaping or creating anything else in life, and we may justly consider them as the starting point for the (Jungian) journey of individuation and meaning making. “It is only *through* the body that competing (con)textualities materialize” (Fleckenstein, 1999: 284, italics in original).

Emily Wilcox (2005) describes three stages in the process of healing and transformation of the disconnectedness that contemporary dancers describe between their “inner and outer selves,” which show similarities to the way *Movement Medicine* participants experience embodiment (Wilcox, 2005: 136). She describes an ‘awakening’ (‘l’éveil’), followed by ‘awareness’ (‘la conscience’) and

the final stage of ‘expression’ (*l’expression*) refers to the communication of the previous two stages to the outside world (Wilcox, 2005: 129). She states that “without all three aspects, the process of transformation (...) cannot occur” (*ibid.*). To achieve the state of expression, which she describes as “key component of healing,” one needs to develop a “correct bodily state,” which allows a dancer “to detect and recognize an inner essence and to calibrate this sensation with an awareness of the relationship between the inner and outer essences and the environment” (Wilcox, 2005: 135-6). She concludes: “Through expression a connection is made between inner and outer and the inner essence becomes manifest. Once this connection is made and presence is achieved, the dancer becomes the healer and expression cure” (Wilcox, 2005: 136). There is a connection between the inner and the outer, the subjective and the objective, the personal and the general, the individual and the collective in combination with being present in that, which allows healing to happen. This can be read as an encouragement of starting to heal the Cartesian split not only from within but also from without.

We can see embodiment as “a multilayered mind-body continuum of corporeality, affectivity, cognitivity, and spirituality whose layers are subtly interwoven and mutually interactive” (Shaw, 1994: 11). This continuum includes body, heart, mind, and indeed also spirituality and includes, transcends and bridges movement between self, humanity, the world and divinity (*ibid.*). It is therefore the starting ground for further experiences, for healing and for connection with the world including spiritual aspects, which we will discuss in the next two chapters.

## Chapter 6: Practicing new skills and behaviour

In the process of making up my particular story, I turn facts into fiction-internalising and personalising what happened to me; and then fiction back into fact: 'This is the way it's always been; the only way it can be.' But when I set the story in motion, as I did recently at Awakening in Dartington, and Source in Manchester, new perspectives emerge. New ways of being and relating become possible. I begin to see how to create change in my life, and what the next step might be.

Rob, newsletter 05.09

Among many dance therapists, Daria Halprin recognises that "through consistent, repetitive practice and reflection, it is possible to stabilize new imprints that we can then apply outside the studio" (D. Halprin, 2003: 104). It takes reminding, courage, practice, acceptance of forgetting and falling back into old habits, and choice over and over again, to instil a new point of view. It helps to do this in community, as people can help remind each other of their new choices, which is an asset of *Movement Medicine* compared to individual dance therapy. To follow on from the previous chapter and the dynamic between interior and exterior in the description of embodiment, this chapter describes the possibility and practice of learning (new) skills in social and emotional areas and the capacity to create new imprints in the psyche and soul.

### 6.1 Social skills and Intimacy

Participants describe increased social skills as firstly becoming aware of the other person or persons around oneself and negotiating the space between the different dancers, through the 'M.E.S.A.' practice described in §4.8.2. Through the (spoken or unspoken) invitation of the space as 'research lab' or 'play ground', participants grow an increased sense and clarity of boundaries and integrity and how to uphold, respect and strengthen these and cultivate an awareness of "where I am and where the other starts." Specific exercises that involve dance partners can bring up deeply ingrained personal issues such as fear of rejection, and many participants initially

struggle with this. Julia describes her ‘journey’ with partnering exercises in which she learned to stay “authentic in company,” referring to being embodied in her own way, energy and space, while relating to someone else:

In the beginning, as soon as I had to partner somebody, I found myself echoing them, or trying to help them feel more partnered with me, more connected to me, so I moved out of the space I was in. I might’ve been in a particular space, but at the end of the dance with that partner, I was in their space more. It took me a long time to be able to dance exactly where I was at, and stay open to their different moves. But now I just stayed self-contained, and in the end it worked out okay.

Julia, interview 20.06.08

People observe themselves mirroring the other person’s movements and energy, and adapting their own movements accordingly. This is often interpreted as tendency towards “giving themselves away,” “echoing the other” or “trying to help the other feeling at ease” and being “so sensitive to the other that own needs are ignored.” Other people notice their need to entertain and amuse their dance partner, by acting silly, dancing beautifully or doing impressive steps (for example Rachel, interview 18.11.08). Others again, as we saw earlier, observe an often strong self-criticism that they are dancing too big, too masculine, too intense, too sexual, too arrogantly, too dominant, too aggressive, too egocentric (a.o. Julia, newsletter 05.07). Because the body language is so clear and the feedback often immediate and visible, these patterns are more easily observed than for example in a situation of dialogue. The dance creates an opportunity to practice staying ‘self-contained’ and ‘authentic’ (Julia, interview 20.06.08, Rachel, interview 18.11.08); learning to ‘speak’ in movement and in words what is important (Hans B., interview 04.09.08); trying things out to test how they feel, for example the energy of aggression, or gossip, or flirtation (Mirjam, interview 22.11.07); learning to say ‘no’; learning to express rage without directing it and discovering it is not destructive in itself. Daria Halprin similarly writes about the dance as:

the field of play upon which we are able to safely project our responses and relive some of the disturbing situations in our lives. Feelings and experiences are transformed through this dynamic use of creativity. In

improvisation, we can try things out, make discoveries, take risks, do it again if it does not feel right, be silly, brave, nasty, or enraged, tear things apart, put it all back together, or make love and war in the imaginal field of the expressive arts studio. We can express feelings that need release, face demons of the past or the present, or feel the pure joy of our bodies, minds, and spirits in communion. We create models for new ways of learning, knowing, and expressing.

In this way, our lives feel our art by making it real and authentic, and our art opens and reflects back to us images of who we have been, who we are, and who we might become. As we find our integrity in the ways we shape our bodies, movements, images, and feelings through art, with time and practice we are able to shape more creative relationships with ourselves and others (D. D. Halprin, 2003: 19).

*Movement Medicine* participants consider these skills as a great advantage, which ripples out into their daily life situations as well. Despite teachers' encouragement for dancing with what is 'true' in each moment, learning and having the courage to dance exactly that, can take a long time. When dancers realise that they are acceptable in all their 'colours' and 'shapes', that they are not rejected as they feared, their self-confidence often increases. It can furthermore lead to increased self-realisation, knowledge and empowerment, as Fiona Buckland explains:

This sensation of self-realization, of reaching something inside and being able to bring it out creatively through the sensation of moving your body, produced self-knowledge. Through self-knowledge the participant connected with others and made meaning on the dance floor. This sense of empowerment was not exterior or discursive. If the dancer was able to meet the challenge of creating with his or her own body a feeling of un-self-conscious pleasure, the sensation of moving produced knowledge and empowerment. The repetition of the pulse of music and movement, the opportunities for variations, interpretation, embellishment, and development within social improvised dance created a framework in which possibilities could be realized. The social character of this improvisation opened a space for intersubjectivities to be developed and practiced (F. Buckland, 2002: 122-3).

She states that the social character of improvised dance leads to realise different possibilities, which is similar to the expression of the dance floor as 'research laboratory' in which new ways of behaving can be explored and practiced.

The dance also offers a place to explore touch and intimacy, between men, between women and between opposite sexes, in a way that hardly happens in everyday life outside a primary relationship. This includes a range of different qualities from loving softness and gentleness, a sense of unconditional love in a specific moment, being able to ‘fall in love’ with ‘everyone’ on the dance floor, to being touched by the openness shared with another dancer. This can be experienced as overwhelming, intimate and moving:

I’ve had some dances with women that were so intimate, that tears were streaming down my face. I had this one dance with three other women, all weaving in and out of each other. And it was so gentle and nurturing, I don’t experience that kind of touch elsewhere in my life. Me and my friends hug, but this was on another level. It was like four goddesses weaving in and out of each other.

Elloa, interview 15.11.09

Being vulnerable and “letting another person in” creates incredibly strong, beautiful and often unusual experiences, where people see the beauty both inside the partner and inside themselves. Hans B. says “it is almost incomprehensible, almost as if coming from somewhere else, unearthly” (interview 04.09.08). Meeting the possibility of love and softness inside oneself on the dance floor, allows participants to take that experience home to their family, affecting the relationship they have with their partner, children, or parents. People recognise that it does not always feel as easy at home as on the dance floor and that it is like a muscle of awareness that needs to be trained (for example Mirjam, interview 22.11.07; Hans B., interview 04.09.08).

Dances can also be experienced as sensual or fiercely sexual, and on the dance floor these aspects can be explored without having to be ‘followed through’:

I had this amazing dance with another person in a Libido workshop last week where we were both doing exactly what we felt at the moment, and were being very sexy and were completely in contact. I never thought I could do that, but it just happened and gives me a lot of confidence for my relationships: see I don’t have to lose myself, or go out of contact, or hold back...

Anonymous, interview 12.01.09



I find I can be with somebody, and really feeling ‘oh, you’re so beautiful, you’re absolutely fantastic, you’re gorgeous, and it’s amazing that we’re dancing together in this way...’, and then just to let them go (...) without creating a huge big drama inside my head of ‘oh I must have that person, I must follow it through, it won’t feel complete unless something sexual happens’. (...) When I have strong feelings for other people outside my partnership, I’ve already had an opportunity on the dance floor to practise feeling the brilliance and wonder of those feelings, but then not needing to follow it through.

Rachel, interview 18.11.08

The dance offers a place, different to how some people experience non-dance places, where these energies and dynamics do not necessarily have to lead to sexual contact (compare O’Connor, 1997). For couples, this may lead to a need of clarifying boundaries within their relationship. Some acknowledge the possibility of a flirtatious dynamic with someone else than their partner as an enormous gift, others perceive this as a tricky dynamic which needs trust and communication, but which eventually creates a stronger bond between the partners. In general, teachers tend to stress that “falling in love on the dance floor” is easy, but to be careful with projecting those emergent feelings onto someone as “their potential life partner” (field notes 12.12.07).

The invitation can be to become “one’s own lover,” to “fall in love with oneself,” and to give space to parts that are inhibited or buried. One of the adages is “feel your sexual power, not for anyone, not for anything” (field notes 10.04.10). There can also be an invitation to explore the ‘dance of creation’, of opposite forces, of masculine and feminine. This is the specific terrain of workshops such as ‘Source’, to which the following quote relates:

I know this work. I know its fruits no less than its ongoing, never-finishedness. (...) I can begin, can begin again to go in, begin to allow, begin to uncover, unpick and undo the rigid cage of rules and roles, perceptions and expectations, to touch the layers of numbness that protect the ultimate, screaming pain, to find a prior loveliness, and beneath, the primary power.

Angela, newsletter 02.09

Although sensual and sexual feelings and experiences are certainly present on the dance floor, people are encouraged to take them personally, rather than project them onto someone else. These feelings are acknowledged, but are not overtly invited.

## 6.2 Dancing with Emotions

In the previous chapter we have already touched upon the manifestations of emotions in the physique. This section looks specifically at working with emotions that arise on the dance floor or that are brought in from daily life. For some, working with emotions in a conscious manner is new ‘territory’. The container of the dance allows them to take first, tentative or big, shifting explorations in this area. Jo Hardy, body-oriented psychotherapist, *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> teacher and part of the Staff of the ‘School of Movement Medicine’, describes “taboos about certain feelings” in families, even related to one’s specific role within the family, for example: “I’m the peaceful-make-it-all-right-person, I’m not the angry one” (interview 22.05.08). People describe being accustomed to deny or repress feelings, for example in families where emotions are regarded as disturbances that have to be kept at bay (Mary, interview 07.07.08), or out of fear of disharmony and potentially destructive effects of showing emotions. Participants also describe that discovering certain emotions within oneself can lead to shame, hiding them and fearing rejection and isolation when expressing them. Mary uses Gabrielle Roth’s metaphor for this, ‘psychological algebra’. The effect of making emotions a ‘bad’, unwanted thing, is thought to increase them, creating for example:

“fear of fear, shame of anger, fear of sadness, or sadness about sadness. So you not only have fear, but then you have ‘fear of fear’, [i.e. fear square] because you’re not supposed to have it. ‘Psychological algebra’ is my name for what we’re dissolving in this work. What I feel is that we’re dissolving the squared bits, and going back to the essential components, and giving them their value, their worth, and their goal that they have.”

(Mary, interview 07.07.08)

We have already seen the importance of a safe, contained, judgement-free environment in Chapter 4, where people can ‘bring’ to the dance floor whatever is going on, in an atmosphere of permission, encouragement and ‘play’. According to Susannah Darling Khan, this allows “the palette of the human experience” with everything inside to come up: sadness, joy, fearfulness and courage (07.10).<sup>167</sup> She furthermore stresses an interrelationship between the heart and embodiment: “For the heart to be awake and available to life (...) our bodies need to be open (...). And for our bodies to be open, or free, we need to become unafraid of our hearts, of our passion, of our vulnerability, of our tenderness, of our strength” (newsletter 04.09). On the dance floor people are able to create and practice a different relationship to emotions, in essence becoming unafraid of them and becoming skilled in ‘negotiating’ them in daily life, considering them as useful rather than unwanted phenomena. This requires reframing them and understanding their function, especially the advantages of certain emotions. For this purpose, *Movement Medicine* turns to the analogy of the animal world, inspired in part by Peter Levine’s work on working with trauma (Levine, 1997). The value of for example fear is explained as a biological response to threat, creating alertness and mobilising energy. Participants are encouraged to feel and tolerate fear rather than being afraid of it, learning how it can work for them rather than against them (field notes 03.07.2008). New interpretations of fear could for example be: “Fear is teaching me to listen. Fear is teaching me to stay fluid. Fear is teaching me to be present. Fear is teaching me to follow my intuition” (field notes 03.07.08). As Mary jokingly comments: “You can’t go to a workshop without hearing: ‘fear is my friend’, which is so different from the mass of alternative culture that we should somehow be without fear, without anger...” (interview 07.07.08). Learning to re-label or reappraise emotions is one of the tools that participants consider as very useful: rephrasing the interpretation reframes the experience, and opens up new ways of being and behaving. Practically for example, people are encouraged to slow down when they feel ‘frozen’ (field notes 03.07.08), to keep moving, to keep

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<sup>167</sup> Transcription of the short movie on ‘The Long Dance’, July 2010, made by Ben Cole: [http://web.me.com/bencole/Ben\\_Cole\\_Cinematography\\_web\\_site/The\\_Long\\_Dance.html](http://web.me.com/bencole/Ben_Cole_Cinematography_web_site/The_Long_Dance.html), accessed September 22, 2010.

feeling the rhythm in the body even if the movement is very small. The woman below describes how this inclusion allows for the emotion to lift and be released:

I've learned that if you keep moving you can actually shift the emotion. When you're moved to tears in the dance and the person who's leading it has come over [saying] 'just keep moving', and you keep moving and it goes! You get to feel it, you express it, so you're not negating the experience of the emotion through the body, but you're allowing it to come out and then you move it. And then it's released, and that's really exciting!

Anonymous, interview 20.11.08

Participants experience the beneficial effect of these exercises and new ways of negotiating emotions. Teachers stress that emotions are not good or bad in themselves, but in a way merely 'signals' from the instinct that call for action. So called 'shadow sides' of emotions are however recognised, and the dance is seen as a tool to 'illuminate and transform' the potentially distorted expressions of emotions (field notes 04.07.08). People are also encouraged to engage with feelings of discomfort if they arise. For example in moments of boredom, confusion, bewilderment or feeling out-of-place, people are invited to accept these emotions and dance with them. The teacher may suggest, when that feels impossible, to transform them into a prayer dance for everyone who feels similar feelings. In this sense, they are also included in 'the bigger picture' beyond the individual, losing some of the immediate identification with or immersion in them, still making a significant 'contribution' to the group field by responsibly 'holding' or rather 'moving' that particular emotion (field notes 23.06.07).

Inclusion of the senses and emotions is, according to Blacking, not just desirable, but "essential both for balanced behaviour and for the effective use of the intellect" (Blacking, 1978: 13). He described that when the two modes of consciousness 'intellect' and 'affect' are integrated, the 'highest achievements' are possible (Blacking, 1978: 13). Also Damasio stresses that cognition needs an environment to be processed, i.e. the body (1999: 40-2). Reason and emotion need each other in processes of decision-making, discernment and action.

Much research has been done in many different fields, trying to understand the substance and meaning of emotions (see for example de Sousa, 2010) and the

difference between ‘emotions’ and ‘feelings’. According to Damasio (2004) emotions are ‘actions or movement’, sometimes visible to others through facial expression, voice and behaviour occurring in the body, whereas feelings, as mental images, are always invisible and playing out in the mind only. Emotions precede feelings and form the foundation for the latter. Intimately related through what is often a continuous process, they are often considered as one single thing.<sup>168</sup> This distinction seems similar to that between ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ emotions, the latter following and often being caused by the former (Jansen, 2004). Primary emotions are also seen as genetically based and existing from birth, whereas secondary emotions emerge over time influenced by social conditioning and personal experience (Fuller, 2006: 9, 28). Fear, anger, sadness, joy, love, and surprise can be seen as ‘primary’ or ‘core’ emotions (Fuller, 2006: 9, 30; Goleman, 1995: 289-90). These are also recognised in cultures that have not been exposed to mass media (Ekman & Friesen, 1986: 167). Secondary emotions, acquired over time, include for example adoration, grief, amazement, anticipation, distraction (Fuller, 2006: 9, 30).

Despite discerning many different emotions in the research data,<sup>169</sup> the main and most frequently mentioned ‘families of emotion’ (Goleman, 1995) are indeed sadness, anger, fear, joy and love. One of *Movement Medicine*’s exercises called ‘The Four Chambers of the Heart’ contains an exploration of four of these ‘core’ or ‘primary’ emotions: fear, anger, sadness and joy. During a guided meditation, people are taken to meet “the wise elder in the central courtyard of their hearts” (field notes 04.03.09), who is presented as the compassionate part of oneself that has witnessed one’s whole life, and is knowledgeable about all matters of the heart. This inner wisdom keeper can be asked questions, and introduces people to the guardians of each of ‘The Four Chambers of the Heart’. As we saw in §2.2.2, Deer, who guards the ‘Chamber of Awakening’, represents courage and awakening. In this chamber the opposite emotion of ‘fear’ can be explored. Jaguar, the guardian of the ‘Chamber of Integrity’, is the guide for exploring boundaries, assertiveness,

<sup>168</sup> Damasio points out that Spinoza for instance wrote about ‘affect’, a word derived from Latin (‘affectus’), which is appropriate for both feelings and emotions (2004: 28).

<sup>169</sup> The original codebook contained 49 different emotional areas each in turn further subdivided in a range of nuances, see Appendix J.

protection, clarity and anger. Salmon, in the ‘Chamber of Surrender’, accompanies processes of letting go and grief. And finally, Humming Bird or Dragonfly in the ‘Chamber of Gratitude’ represent both gratitude and joy (field notes 04.03.09).

*Movement Medicine’s* language relating to emotions and the heart once again contains many metaphors. For example one intensive workshop, ‘Initiation’, is known as the emotional ‘washing machine’, ‘ice bergs’ and ‘freezers’ are metaphoric for stored emotions that have not been attended to, and analogies such as for example cheetah cubs playfully re-enacting a lion attack drawn from Levine (1997: 174-5) help with understanding how the dance can act as a practice ground. The metaphors engage the visual and mental facilities and seem to make emotions more tangible, concrete and accessible. With metaphors, an analogy is sought for expression of inner state. This can help insights trickling through:

At ‘Initiation’ one morning, I woke up feeling like a conquered soldier, drab and miserable. What happened? I realised I’d lost my sword. During the day I discovered that this was related to finding my truth, even in small things, not just doing something to be accepted. The image of the sword helped me, feeling the presence of the knight and his sword. Even if he’s totally smashed into smithereens, his heart remains radiant. So that is when I work with something in the dance, and later the insight seeps through. That comes with being aware of your body, and your relationship with it.

Mirjam, interview 22.11.07

Another metaphor often used is that of stored emotions as the accumulated ice in a freezer or the image of an iceberg. Rather than trying to ‘melt’ it fast and forcefully, people are encouraged to take their time and follow their own pace at defrosting the ice, ‘nibbling’ off as much as and no more than they can handle.

An iceberg, or ice mountain, is often an image for something that is blocking your emotion. And ‘zapping the iceberg’, means turning your attention to it to try to get rid of it, to get rid of my resistance to grief, by looking at it, and challenging it, and taking it apart and blablabla. But Susannah said instead of ‘zapping the iceberg’, you just keep the water that it is floating in, warm and moving. And eventually, the iceberg will just melt. And I have a feeling that that’s the way. That’s the image that makes sense to me. Long and slow and probably side ways. And then maybe in a moment.

Mary, follow-up interview 19.09.08

In general people mention effects such as an increased awareness of emotions and therefore feeling more, being able to attend to feelings more, to 'manage' or 'deal with' or 'negotiate' emotions more effectively and being less overwhelmed by them. 'Difficult emotions' are viewed as useful and accepted as part of the 'inner landscape', rather than being denied or repressed. This creates a different relationship with both the heart and with emotions, described by participants as softer and gentler, and not 'punishing' the heart for 'feeling' so much, but seeing this as its specific task and skill. One woman describes the set of tools she has learned as "a series of points of reference, a map" which allow her to be as much as possible in the essence of the emotion rather than in the stories she 'creates' around certain emotions. These maps offer her a different context in which "feelings make sense" as part of her "embodied heart" (Anonymous, newsletter 04.08). Some call this "including the shadow," or "walking the shadow lands." An encouragement and inclusion of this gives participants a wonderfully 'free' feeling.

People describe how, because their emotional range (width and depth) has increased, they can also feel more empathy and compassion for others and the 'capacity' of their hearts seems to have expanded to be able to encompass more than before, as if the 'container' has grown, strengthened and become more flexible. One person remarks on the downside of tending to and cultivating emotions, and attributes losing his job to becoming too emotional and not being in control of them anymore. On the other hand he acknowledges that these increased emotional skills also supported him in the state of crisis that followed (Victor, interview 25.09.08).

Some emotions are triggered on the dance floor (for example regarding body image, social skills, and being seen), others can be brought to the dance consciously, and may form the personal focus of a workshop or workshops over a period of time. The following quotation describes how 'dancing with emotions' may work:

'Yeah, I'm feeling annoyed, how do I express that in my dance?' without saying 'I'm annoyed about that person, or that person has made me annoyed,' just to say 'okay, this is my 'annoyed dance'! Oh, this is an interesting annoyed dance!' So when I feel annoyed, what is the effect in

my body? Oh, the effect is oow, oow [makes expressive sounds, and it feels like she is moving on the other end of the phone, EK], it comes out in my arms and then suddenly the annoyance isn't something I don't want (...) but actually I can welcome in the annoyance, because it turns my dance into something interesting. (...) That's been really helpful in life, to be able to welcome in so much of a greater range of emotional experience, and being able to stay with many more situations where I've had my buttons pressed in response to people's way of being, just being able to get interested in that: "Oh that's interesting! What's going on for me now?" Rather than thinking "oh god, get that person away from me" [laughs]."

Rachel, interview 18.11.08

The relatively small sample of *Movement Medicine* dancers that participated in this study contains examples of a wide range of quite difficult personal experiences such as the loss of loved ones through death or separation, dealing with severe illnesses such as cancer, HIV and consequences of accidents, histories of self-harm and eating disorders, and various forms of abuse, physical violence and addiction. One person struggled with a period of 'madness and depression'. During this time (s)he experienced that "the dance floor, the earth, the earth of the dance floor was holding my madness. It was holding my madness" (Anonymous, interview 22.05.08). Including other support structures of family and friends, (s)he felt:

safe enough to nearly go mad, or sink into this deep, black hole, or whiz of round the dance floor like the most manic creature you have ever seen on the earth. (...) And I could just dance it, and dance it, and dance it, and dance it, and practice, and practice, and practice, and practice, and practice (...). My relationship with fear, my knowledge of fear has increased and at the same time so has my courage, [sighs deeply], all the shadows born into being, ahh....

Anonymous, interview 16.06.08

We saw in the previous chapter that participants assume that these experiences, as long as they remain unattended or unreleased, get stored in the body and potentially result in blockages or unhelpful body patterns, which is often the case as tools to move through the experience at the time can be absent or inaccessible. Through movement and dance these can be 'accessed', 'moved', 'unblocked' and 'healed', a view also reflected in many body-oriented and movement therapies. Whereas



experiencing emotions in the heart or gut area is commonly accepted, it is interesting to note that some participants refer to emotions in other parts of the body such as feeling “a package of grief” on their backs (Mirjam, interview 22.11.07), “rage in the thighs” or “sadness in the arms” (Julia, interview 20.06.08), which were mentioned earlier. One woman felt the pain of physical, sexual and psychological abuse she had suffered as a child in different parts of her body (her legs, elbows and belly). Movement took her awareness into these body parts and noticing pain and blockage there, she was able to ‘liberate’ this by moving each specific body part (Paloma, interview 24.11.07). Somehow through her attention the pain did not ‘leave’, but was transformed in or accompanied by love.

Knowing that some emotions need a different ‘trigger’, are not accessible in the workshop space or cannot at all be ‘orchestrated’ is part of people getting to know themselves and their strategies. There is a seemingly paradoxical assumption that on the one hand ‘postponing’ emotions may increase the pressure, while on the other hand one “cannot push the river,” and that it does not do to force oneself to work with something. People realise for themselves when certain emotions are not yet dealt with, when they are avoiding or storing them for a later time or simply not having access to them yet, as Mary says: “So anger is largely done, fear is my area of fascination at the moment, where I’m working with at the moment, and sadness is still there on the horizon (interview 07.07.08).

### **6.3 Through a dark night of the soul...**

Whether bringing difficult life experiences to the dance floor or not, most participants at some point feel they are “going over the edge of the comfort zone,” ‘falling apart’ or ‘deconstructing’. Some describe this as “a dark night of the soul,” a concept which is recognised in most healing trajectories, mystical journeys and also in Jung’s ‘individuation’. He compared this stage of the hero’s journey to “being swallowed up in the belly of the whale or dragon” (Jung, 1993 [1953]: 338). This may refer to physical, emotional, psychological, or spiritual experiences and is often accompanied by feelings of being in the unknown, not knowing, being

uncomfortably uncertain. As Hans B. describes, it is an “art to let in the not-knowing” including a feeling of incredible uncertainty, of “god, this is really tricky.” He describes that the learning happens through contacting the ‘not knowing’, which can be very subtle and very forceful (interview 04.09.08). The dance is certainly not always an easy place:

I have experienced the Dance as frightening, dark, inhibiting, dangerous, physically and energetically unsafe, intrusive, destructive, stressful, distancing, unloving, boring, pointless, vain, silly, nasty. And every time I have been so glad I kept dancing through that and got to the other side. Those are the times I treasure most - they are the leaps of faith into a new way being in the world, which nurtures me as I grow.

Lunar, interview 15.11.08

‘Dark’ feelings such as shame, stress, guilt, fear, rage, a feeling that life is uninhabitable, and yet feeling ‘stuck’ are uncomfortable places to visit in oneself or to admit oneself to feeling. Learning to tolerate the unknown is encouraged by emphasising support structures that are always there, such as the physical body and the support of the earth underneath us. According to Ya’Acov Darling Khan, ‘arriving’ in these structures makes one more accessible to life, at the same time stronger and more vulnerable (field notes 06.03.09). This is one of the reasons why participants pursue ‘inner work’ in their free time, despite it not being easy. Ali explains it as follows:

It’s such tiring and challenging work at times that in the darker moments it’s easy to joke that we must all be slightly mad to be paying for such exquisite torture. After all who in their right minds spends their vacation trawling the unfathomable depths of their uncharted oceans? Those of us who wish to hear the deep dreams held in the heart and to dance them to life, for ourselves and all our relations.

Ali, newsletter 07.09

Surviving these dark nights and challenges often eventually results in an increased self-confidence, knowing from experience that one is able to handle more than one initially thought. This seems comparable to facing the unknown trials of rituals, of which a degree of fear and anxiety is almost always part. Overcoming this leads to

increased self-esteem and empowerment, caused by crossing one's boundaries. Participants keep dancing, through fear, the unknown, anxiety, avoidance and resistance and eventually they come out "on the other side." There they recognise that after doing "the hard work" life seemingly becomes easier, and therefore they are willing to 'invest' in that ultimate reward. None of the interviewees describes a situation where they did not overcome the challenge, so indeed they do find the support structures to 'tackle' that which comes up in life and/or in the dance.

#### **6.4 Transforming the mind and changing the perception of the story**

Similarly to exploring new meanings of emotions, participants are also encouraged to explore the mechanisms of thinking about and interpreting the world around them. They describe discovering and exploring patterns within oneself and realising that they can be changed as another of the key factors to which *Movement Medicine* contributes. This process can be painful, but also fruitful, surprising and fun (Jenny, newsletter 01.08; Malka, newsletter 06.07).

The Darling Khans developed a concept called 'understudies', similar to for example 'masks', 'sub-personalities' or 'ego' in other fields. In acting, the 'understudy' refers to the person who is able to replace the main actor. 'Understudies' in *Movement Medicine* are seen as survival strategies which help protect the soul in challenging situations, much like the acting understudy stepping in for the main actor.

[Understudies] are like software programs running our being and acting, and function as a self confirming lens through which we see and perceive the world. They have come into existence to help us survive certain situations in life, but have often become distorted in their 'grip' over us. Becoming aware of these patterns, or ego characters, or 'tapes' that run through our consciousness, helps to transform them from being this lens right in front of us, to being a helper or a tool beside us.

Ya'Acov and Susannah Darling Khan,  
'Phoenix Retreat 2009', preparation letter

The understudy can, according to the Darling Khans, easily become the only lens for interpreting the world, thus shaping one's identity, self-confidence and actions. The 'distortion' mentioned above, refers to the understudy growing beyond its role of helper or survival strategy, and instead "performing nearly all the time" (Ya'Acov Darling Khan, newsletter 12.07). We can compare this again to the individual modal states (MSi) of the MMF, which serve a purpose even if they are inadequate or self-destructive, otherwise they would not continue to exist. Because the MSi's that are constructed during early phases of socialisation "carry strong emotional affect," they influence and inform states that are acquired later. Even though in adults these states may appear as counter-productive and therefore potentially harmful, they are presumably still related to the initial need for affect (Samuel, 1990: 77). Like 'masks' (or 'persona') recognised in psychotherapy, understudies provide security on the one hand yet cause a limiting structure at the same time, preventing a person from expressing their real nature (Noack, 1992: 186). As Rob points out:

The stories we tell ourselves about who we are and what we are doing here define and limit the choices we make. If I have to be the hero, what do I do with my cowardice? If I'm a 'pillar of society,' what happens to my desire to subvert the system? How can my 'Mr Nice Guy' get angry? If I feel like the victim or the perpetual outsider, how do I ask for what I want? If I'm always busy, what happens to my need for stillness? If I have to have all the answers, how do I cope with my stupidity?

Rob, newsletter 05.09

*Movement Medicine* includes various tools to explore these understudies, see their value, appreciate them, and then letting them return to their 'healthy' role as helper rather than as 'main actor'. These tools include first of all encouraging people to become conscious of these understudies through a process of self-reflection (before and during workshops) including a set of questions (for example 'Conflicting Commitments' and the 'Dance of the Understudy'), observing oneself especially in moments of being under stress. This is explained by another metaphor, of 'software' and 'default settings' on a computer: "If you think of how you react when under stress in different situations, what we call your 'default mode' will

become clear” (Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan, ‘Phoenix Retreat 2009’, preparation letter). Using computer metaphors to describe human experiences is a widely used contemporary extension of the body-as-machine metaphor. It is interesting that this image seems to reinforce the dualism of body and mind or soul at first, in order to understand the mechanisms at work in the human organism, with the ultimate aim of integrating and uniting them. Like broken computer hardware, the dysfunctional human system can be ‘repaired’ (for a discussion of computer metaphors and the human body see Segal, 2005: 121).

As we saw earlier, in the shamanic world view it is assumed that any event that causes shock, could cause a part of the soul or essence to leave the body in order to survive (Ingerman, 1991). This ‘soul loss’ is comparable with the earlier mentioned ‘survival strategies’, and with disassociation in psychology (Ingerman, 1991). The lost soul pieces usually cannot return by themselves but must be called back consciously, in traditional cultures the task of the shaman. ‘Soul retrieval’ is one of the two main shamanic healing techniques (Horwitz, undated; Ingerman, 1991).<sup>170</sup> Noack also describes the reclaiming split-off parts in dance movement therapy, which leads to an increase in physical and psychical energy (Noack, 1992: 186). For this purpose *Movement Medicine* has developed the ‘Systematic Essential Energy Retrieval Process’ (‘S.E.E.R.’) and the ‘Phoenix Process’, which are both aimed at dealing with difficult moments of the past, releasing energy, and retrieving lost parts of the soul. As such they are slightly different processes of soul retrieval (Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 162). The ‘S.E.E.R. Process’ is a danced adaptation of Carlos Castaneda’s technique of ‘recapitulation’ (Castaneda, 1981: 285-92; Sanchez, 1995: 73-84).<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> The Darling Khans explain that the lost pieces go to ‘soul school’, where they continue learning until their return, bringing the new insights and wisdom back to the body with them (field notes 05.03.09).

<sup>171</sup> Ya’Acov Darling Khan writes about this adaptation process: “I first heard about recapitulation in the writings of Carlos Castaneda. I then met and worked with Victor Sanchez and took part in a whole process of recapitulation with him. Since then, I have spent a lot of time developing a form of movement recapitulation that I have found to be extremely effective and a lot more fun than sitting in a black box for weeks combing through personal histories! What is recapitulation? It’s a way of cleaning up the energy associated with traumatic or challenging events that still have an effect on us in the present. The thing is, it works. People who have felt disempowered for years through experiences from their past have found the courage and the strength to acknowledge them, express

There are several differences between the ‘S.E.E.R.’ and the ‘Phoenix’ processes. The former focuses more on general patterns created by the understudies. ‘S.E.E.R.’ furthermore consists of nine steps while the ‘Phoenix Process’ works with five different stages that include the ‘S.E.E.R.’ This generally results in the ‘Phoenix Process’ being lengthier, taking 45 minutes to an hour, whereas ‘S.E.E.R.’ can be moved through much faster, even in five or ten minutes. What is also different is that ‘Phoenix’ consciously works with the physical spacing of things, similarly to ‘Family Constellations’, stepping into and out of different positions in the mandala or circle (field notes 05.03.09). In general, people consider both techniques as effective and powerful. Fiona for example writes about this process:

The healing that has been done has been overwhelming me. In all honesty, I have felt a shadow disappear from my life as a result of those two recapitulations. I know the distress that those two life experiences have caused me... but I now feel I have a fighting chance of living with those memories, and no longer allowing them to interfere with me.

Fiona, newsletter 04.07

An important part of both processes is conscious choice for a ‘new’ story. Although many things of course remain outside of our immediate sphere of influence, the Darling Khans emphasise that we have influence with regard to the *meaning* we attribute to certain situations and life events give to situations we encounter: “We don’t believe we create our own reality. We do believe we create our own *perception* of reality” (field notes 01.04.09). The assumed capacity of the brain to transform neural patterns and thoughts is drawn from insights in neuroscience (e.g. Doidge, 2007). This capacity is compared to creating a new path through an overgrown field or forest. The path that is used regularly is wide and easy to travel on, whereas the new path takes effort to be established.<sup>172</sup> Some participants call this “remodelling memories,” others “creating new patterns of

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whatever needs to be expressed, learn from them, let them go and call back energy that may have been lost for a very long time” (newsletter 04.07).

<sup>172</sup> This is similar to Doidge’s metaphor of sleighing down a snowy slope for creating habitual tracks or neural pathways (2007: 209).

thinking,” which are gradually acquired and taken to other situations outside the dance floor:

You start to introduce a new... pattern of thinking. Like how you relate to things. You're dancing on the dance floor, you start to relate to things in a different way. (...) When I go to another place, it is still with me. You then realise that something can go in a different way, you just say to yourself: "Remember, listen, listen... (...) don't worry [choose another action]."

Paloma, interview 24.11.07

Even in the face of big processes such as illness and death participants (start to) recognise this capacity for choice. The extract below is a poignant example of this, relating to dealing with HIV and Hepatitis viruses:

It seems to me that you are a little bit freer to choose, even if I know that on a certain level I don't choose and don't decide anything, it's already there, but I need to know that I can choose. (...) If I just believed what other people were saying about my viruses, I think that probably I was already dead. (...) Not just like: "Yeah, I'm going to die," but "No, I'm going to do something different before I die." Yeah, it's very practical. And dancing is very practical, just moving my body through the space, like a metaphor of life.

Anonymous, interview 04.09.08

Participants recognise embodiment as agency for manifesting and creating things in life as we have seen in the previous chapter. In other words, embodiment can be seen as prerequisite for volition, choice and change. Several other authors comment on embodiment as enhancing self-agency, volition and choice (Fleckenstein, 1999; Gendlin, 1996, de Quincey, personal communication 16.04.09). We could state this even more strongly. As choice, transformation and volition require agency, without embodiment this would be impossible. I am however aware of the difference between embodiment in epistemological and ontological sense, and the question remains how much embodiment needs to be *conscious*, for it to become a tool for change and choice.

## 6.5 Emphasising different values

As well as having a choice regarding thought patterns, *Movement Medicine* also creates awareness of the possibility of choosing the values which to emphasise in life, and therefore choosing the kind of atmosphere people want to live in: “We humans are story tellers. So if we’re telling ourselves stories, we might as well tell stories that are fascinating, inspiring” (Ya’Acov Darling Khan, field notes 01.04.09). This compares to the view of writer and storyteller Ursula Le Guin, who argues that cultures are defined through stories and that it is a skill to invent our own life stories: “All of us have to learn how to invent our lives, make them up, imagine them. We need to be taught these skills; we need guides to show us how. If we don’t, our lives get made up for us by other people” (Le Guin, 2004: 208).<sup>173</sup> *Movement Medicine* participants are indeed taught that this is possible, and discover the possibility to revisit values taken for granted in their upbringing and in our culture and ‘check’ whether these feel right or not. This often has to do with re-evaluating consumerism and materialism, as Elloa for example discovers. What matters to her is giving and receiving love rather than gaining material possessions, status, or focus on achievements. Instead of striving for recognition from others, she now treasures “moments of freedom,” loving herself and others (Elloa, interview 15.11.09):

I do believe that it’s love or fear in this world. It’s love or fear. And... I grew up in fear, and fear has been my companion for a long, long time. And I know it, and I trust it. I do trust it in a weird sort of way. But actually, I know that love is the only thing that’s really real. And I have these connections, I have these moments, when I go to classes.

Elloa, interview 15.11.09

People furthermore describe an increased permission for and inclusion of play, humour, pleasure and celebration, which for some participants takes as much courage and ‘effort’ as letting go of difficult emotions and stories: “To be brave

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<sup>173</sup> Her novel ‘A Wizard of Earthsea’ (1968) was part of the reading list for the first ‘Apprenticeship Programme 2009-2011’.



enough to be in the joy and in the pleasure” (Anonymous, interview 04.09.08), or to consciously choose joy instead of focus on the suffering in life (Julia, interview 20.06.08). Richard started to follow “a path of joy that crossed agony and ecstasy—In love, inspired, at peace being me,” from previously “wrestling with an outlook on life that shifted between darkness and shadowy light” (Richard, haiku ‘Journey of Empowerment 2009’). Janelle is moving from self-destruction “into an existence of open-heartedness, passionate and creative manifestation of balance and unity with all life” (Janelle, haiku ‘Journey of Empowerment 2009’). David describes having a deeper recognition of beauty in the world and people around, even on grey, rainy Monday mornings when the heating is not working and the house looks like a “plumber’s yard,” or an increased enjoyment of the “savour and texture of food” instead of overeating to fill a metaphysical emptiness inside (David, newsletter 12.07).

One of the tools to appreciate life is the ‘21 Gratitudes practice’, which is simply taking some time every day to name 21 or more things one is grateful for (Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan, newsletter 01.07). Many people integrate this into their lives. As Almut puts it: “Thanks to the 21 Gratitudes I am becoming more grateful for everything I have in my life and know more what I want and what I don’t want and can set my boundaries accordingly” (newsletter 06.09). Sini, a Finnish doctor, writes how after an exhausting 24h emergency duty she replaced her initial frustration about everything that she could have done differently (especially *faster*) during her shift, with a “choosing the gratitude-attitude” (email 23.07.09). She realised she had done her absolute best and had actually developed some successful procedures over the last few months that no one had yet credited her with. Remembering an insight she had during the ‘Journey of Empowerment’ ongoing group: “You are the Authority of Your Life and that Authority cannot be given since it’s already Yours,” she went to her wardrobe and put on a shirt she had bought at a flea market, with a text saying “The Cheerleader of the Year.” She chose to be:

my own amazing personal cheerleader who gives me the cheerleading I need to shine and be brave. Writing this makes me cry. It makes me see

myself as a witness and caretaker and the cheerleader of a neglected, adventurous and playful warrior. It makes me realize that there probably is an amazing path for me to dance on. There may be some scary steps on the way and there may come moments when the only person I can rely on is MY OWN AMAZING PERSONAL CHEERLEADER. I'm grateful for this realization. It gives me Power.

Sini, email 23.07.09

Participants also mention different views on learning and education, which do not 'punish' making mistakes and which emphasise unique individual qualities and learning styles, rather than corporate same-ness of all students. It allows learning to be fun and playful, which for many people is a new experience (field notes 30.06.11, and lecture by Sir Ken Robinson).<sup>174</sup>

Furthermore, there is a different evaluation of growing older. Rather than equating old age with 'uselessness', which is implied in our culture's emphasis on youth, beauty and fertility, *Movement Medicine* participants discover value and appreciation in the process growing old and the wisdom contained in long life experience (Mary, follow-up interview 19.09.08). Other values include the possibility of collective 'dreaming and action'; thinking in possibilities rather than impossibilities (both personally and collectively) including an attitude of 'yes' rather than 'no'; emphasising fullness and abundance rather than emptiness and scarcity; the realisation that self-care is important in order to bring one's 'gifts' to the world; humility and humanity; humour and playfulness; and increased attention for and commitment to sustainability. The latter will be discussed in Chapter 8. None of these values were of course entirely absent before. However, the dance experience created an invitation and permission for a conscious and renewed choice for them, over and over again, alone, together, during the dark of the night and the bright of the day.

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<sup>174</sup> Sir Ken Robinson: "Do schools kill creativity?" TED conference, Monterey California, February 2006, available on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iG9CE55wbtY>, accessed September 12, 2011.

### Concluding remarks: renewal and rebirth

The experiences described here reflect in essence the symbolism of the Phoenix, which is central to *Movement Medicine*. Bursting into flame from the beating of its own wings and rising from its own ash (Bachelard, 1990), it is a poignant metaphor for human life. The friction caused by life experiences and harsh conditions can create heat to burn through what no longer serves and, in a supportive environment, can create different perspectives and approaches to deal with circumstances. Jung's 'renovatio', briefly mentioned in §2.2.1, the rebirth or renewal of (parts of) the personality that "are subjected to healing, strengthening, or improvement" (Jung, 1971 [1959]: 114), may even heal bodily ills. He indicated that although this is part of the natural course of life, this process is often disturbed "because consciousness deviates again and again from its archetypal, instinctual foundation and finds itself in opposition to it" (Jung, 1971 [1959]: 40). Bonnie Meekums also stresses that "in any human change process something 'new' is being created" (2002: 14). This can concern behavioural patterns, a sense of self, or core beliefs. Eventually these changes may lead to "a re-patterning of relationships, behaviours, emotions and cognitions" (ibid.) Like Jung, she says: "The core identity remains the same, but our 'take' on life may shift fundamentally. To use another analogy, it is as if the old tune has been rearranged, with fresh harmonies that soothe the soul" (ibid.)

*Movement Medicine* offers a space where people are encouraged and supported in being who they are and become all they can be, or in Jung's terms, where consciousness meets its archetypal foundation (Jung, 1971 [1959]: 40). The expression "finding one's own dance" is used in *Movement Medicine* as an encouragement for each individual to find their individual style and vocabulary of movement which at the same time is a metaphor for finding the 'blueprint' of their unique expression of self and their being in the world. In other words, the dance opens doors to healing, transformation, empowerment and personal growth, regardless the area or the point of entry. Despite certain difficult experiences (triggered) on the dance floor, participants seem to move towards greater wellbeing and ease in life. The processes described in this chapter build forth on embodiment,

as considered key to personal empowerment (compare Darling Khan & Darling Khan, 2009: 84). This compares to Halprin's statement: "As we become attuned and aligned physically, emotionally, and mentally, we grow closer to fulfilling our potentials as human beings" (D. Halprin, 2003: 21). At the same time, this creates "a landing strip for spirit" (Susannah Darling Khan, newsletter 11.09), referring in my understanding both to one's own and to Great Spirit. Such experiences with intangible, other dimensions on the dance floor will be the focus of the next chapter.

## Chapter 7: Reconnecting with the Mysteries: Dance as portal to other dimensions

[The dance] is a Sacred portal from where I can dive deep into the abyss, bringing back a Sacred golden thread, which I can then begin to weave [through] my heart back into oneness with all that is.

Bonnie, letter 2010, received 12.01.10

Dance and spirituality are and have often been closely interwoven in many cultures and times. Notions of accessing other realities and connecting with sacred, divine, and mysterious dimensions of life through, in metaphorical terms, the ‘door’ or ‘gateway’ of the dance, and techniques to achieve that, are widespread (Eliade, 1972 [1951]; Hume, 2007: 1). Also *Movement Medicine*, first and foremost a dance practice, includes many spiritual notions. As we have seen, its underlying worldview is generically shamanic, which is generally adaptable and loosely framed, including elements of many different traditions and approaches. ‘The great mystery’ is one of the terms used by Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan to give people a different reference than the word ‘god’, which they recognise may put people off if they have ambivalent feelings towards monotheist religions. Other terms they use are ‘the source’, ‘the divine’, ‘great spirit’, or, in an analogy with dance, ‘the great choreographer’. In interviews, the words ‘great mystery’ and ‘the mysteries’ are used most often by participants, which I therefore chose to use as well. Furthermore, using the concept of ‘mystery’ avoids the issue of ‘having to believe in something’, as there are dimensions of life that, despite the development of modern science, cannot be understood or explained.<sup>175</sup> Participants are however encouraged to not ‘believe’ any of the suggested notions, yet to “find out for themselves what works.” The connection to the divine is apparent in *Movement Medicine*, yet not forced.

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<sup>175</sup> According to Karen Armstrong, speaking of god must always be paradoxical, because god cannot be contained in a coherent system (Armstrong, 2004: 327), and “the more we learn, the more mysterious our world becomes” (ibid.: 338).

The ‘mesa’ as ritual space (described in Chapter 4) creates a possibility for participants to stumble upon, or access deliberately, realities beyond the physical, through the portal of the moving body. Specific exercises, commitment and a sense of community create a space for extraordinary experiences. Some can easily be traced back to concrete and collectively staged exercises, while others arrive individually, spontaneously, almost as a ‘bonus’, through the activity of the dance and the setting. Their intensity can vary from the “mundane-every-day,” to overwhelmingly strong “once-in-a-lifetime” moments.

Most participants, even if not drawn to this aspect specifically, pick up on and translate the language, mandala, symbols and practices as ‘spiritual’.<sup>176</sup> However, it is not necessarily straightforward what can be classified under ‘spiritual experience’. Where certain phenomena and vocabulary are easily attributed to the domain of religion and spirituality, others are less obvious. Sidestepping the difference between ‘spiritual’ and ‘religious’ experiences, I have used Hood et al.’s adaptation of Hardy’s classification of elements found in religious experiences (Hardy, 1979: 25-9, in Hood et al. 1996: 186-7)<sup>177</sup> as guideline for deciding what to discuss in this chapter, as this overview shows considerable overlap with the way *Movement Medicine* participants classify their experiences.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> There are some exceptions. Two interviewees were initially downright resistant to and ‘suspicious’ of the “transpersonal and ritualistic aspects” and anything ‘spiritual’. This was not what attracted them to the dance (Robert, interview 18.04.08; Mary, interview 07.07.08), even though they were aware that this ‘layer’ was present in the dance. Mary’s scepticism and resistance disappeared completely and unexpectedly during a workshop ‘Alchemy of Stillness’. She suddenly ‘realised’ that “sacred objects, and sacred space” was about “*ordinary* people making a connection with the Mysteries and (...) asking what this is this all about, where we come from, and where we’re going” (Mary, follow-up interview 19.09.08). For the other person it was not a sudden shift but a shift over time, especially appreciating Ya’Acov and Susannah Darling Khan for “really working with their message rather than translating someone else’s message,” and also a change in himself so he was able “to receive something that I wasn’t able to receive before, that mysterious ‘something else’” (Robert, interview 18.04.08).

<sup>177</sup> Full title of this overview: *Classification and Percentages of Various Elements Found in the Solicited Reports of 3,000 Religious Experiences*.

<sup>178</sup> Some of these elements have already been discussed in Chapter 6, such as ‘individuation’ and ‘self-actualisation’ and “changes in attitudes.” Some will be discussed in Chapter 8, such as ‘vocation’, “sense of purpose or new meaning to life,” and also ‘healing’. These seem to me more like a *consequence* of the experience and therefore more appropriate there. Elements that are not mentioned in Hood’s overview, which seem significant for this chapter are *collective* ecstasy and ‘interconnection’ (although sense of unity, and “participation in church” are mentioned but seem

## 7.1 The dance as place of connection, re-connection and inter-connection

Various participants recognise that spiritual practices often seem to either focus on transcendent experiences, searching for meaning and god outside of oneself, or on embodied experiences, rooting spirituality within the body. It seems that *Movement Medicine* has the ability to join both, although the starting point is always the body. Dancing, in the words of Paloma, brought spirituality down from her head into her body, adding “a new vocabulary” to life and opening new doors “to experience life in a different way” (Paloma, interview 24.11.07). The body is seen as a vehicle for “spiritual search, [and for] the search for oneness or unity, non-duality” (Tim, interview 09.12.08), and its ‘earthiness’ can take people ‘to god’ (Paloma, interview 24.11.07.), giving participants a different (more expanded, more inclusive) outlook on spirituality.

Participants talk and write about the sacred dimension of life as an ever-present current, somehow more easily accessed or remembered on the dance floor. They like to “dip into that river” or “dive into the abyss” through the dance, on a regular basis. Although the dance floor is not a sacred place in the sense of wider historic, religious or social meaning or worship, rather just any ordinary studio or village hall, for the duration of the workshop it can indeed become a space ‘between worlds’, where the luminous and sacred may appear. In this sense it is not surprising that people sometimes refer to the dance floor as ‘sacred space’, ‘temple’, or ‘church’.<sup>179</sup> This can sometimes be taken literally, when a workshop or class is organised in a church building or where the dance studio is called ‘temple hall’ in the retreat centre in Orval, although it is generally used metaphorically:

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different than the meaning *Movement Medicine* participants attribute to ‘interconnection’ and ‘community’).

<sup>179</sup> One participant also describes the body as ‘temple’: “The temple of course, (...) is not only the work represented in *Movement Medicine*, but also “the body”, housing the self. The body, the ground of our being. And as we allowed it’s (sic) earth to turn, under the careful attention of our care, we find that we are actually on a deeply mysterious archaeological dig, into it’s [sic] very foundations. One moment finding the debris apparently carelessly left by the ancestral originators of the temple and in the next, see-ing it as a precious, priceless inheritance beyond compare, the chance of being alive enough to hear the heart buried in the body under the rubble” (Ali, newsletter 07.09).

So there is this sense of “this is my church literally,” a church building. But also it’s like home in a way, and something you can depend on, or rely on, and belong to, and also believe the teachings of, and that will tolerate you in different conditions as well. Also a certain amount of ritual, so in all those ways, it is like a church.

Victor, interview 25.09.08

Through these workshops I see life intensified into a sacred place within time and space. This place, this space is available to us at all times as it is part of the great universal dance of all that is, yet in day to day existence we lose sight of this and so for me through dance, through workshops, through the body and dancing together with others we share and go deep into this intensified space.

Bonnie, letter 2010, received 12.01.10

Connection or contact with the divine happens also through prayer. Moving itself can be experienced as prayer or movement can be combined with praying in words:

It felt as if the movement came through me, inner directed by some other hand. My dance became a prayer, a dance with God and my heart expanded so wide. I was swept upon the sound of music, upon a river of love for God and for this life. It became a sacred dance for me.

Katheryn, newsletter 05.08

During workshops, attention is often paid to general circumstances in the world, such as crucial elections, war zones, natural disasters, and climate change conferences. Concrete examples of this are an hour long danced prayer for people in the Libyan revolution in February 2011 and for the nuclear disaster at Fukushima in Japan in March 2011 during a workshop in Amsterdam (field notes 18.03.11). It is not uncommon for the teacher to suggest a danced prayer for such a general cause, and/or to send out ‘blessings’ to people in specific circumstances. Sending out energy, praying, and connecting with others through focussed concentration is commonly recognised as worthwhile and valuable, and one could argue that this belief of interconnection will cause most people to feel their actions and intentions do have an effect. If nothing else, it emphasises compassion and feeling of shared humanity. Rachel for example argues:



We raise loads of energy through our dance and rather than just let that dissipate, it can be send as a prayer of blessing to people who are in need of it. It could be a person (...) who is in need (...) or dancing to bless victims of torture, and also send a blessing out to people who torture, that's the only way that people are going to stop doing harmful things to other people, is by feeling the power of love.

Rachel, interview 18.11.08

I follow Boyer (2000), Hood et al. (1996) and Waaijman (2000), by considering both religion and spirituality as approaches that address our relationship with the inexplicable, unfathomable, elusive, intangible, transient dimensions of life, and for me the essence of spirituality and religion is our lived awareness of our connections with these dimensions. Although the etymology of the word 'religion' is in dispute (Barnhart, 1988), one of the possible interpretations is that 're-ligare' means to 'reconnect', reconnect with self, others, nature and the sacred mysteries of life (Andr  n et al., 2006). These reconnections can be sought after and established in many different places and contexts, and through a variety of activities, including mundane, daily situations (compare Maslow, 1994: 29). Although *Movement Medicine* is not presented as religion, reconnection is central to *Movement Medicine*. 'Reconnecting' as a verb (or practice) is evident in the mandala in several ways and also present as concept in the word 'Interconnection' (the 8<sup>th</sup> 'Gateway'). The 'Star Meditation' is one of the exercises that include several 'directions' of connection. First, it emphasises a reconnection or realignment between body, heart, mind (and spirit) represented by the vertical axis joining the first three of the 'The 9 Gateways'. Secondly, it links an individuals' past, present and future on their road through life, the horizontal-dorsal-ventral axis (back-front-back) which is represented by the fourth, fifth and sixth of 'The 9 Gateways'. And lastly, this meditation connects an individual with all communities of life on earth, and 'the great mystery', through the horizontal lateral (side to side) axis including the final three Gateways of Fulfilment, Interconnection and Realization. The concept of 'Interconnection' is further emphasised in 'The 5 Dimensions of Awareness' of Self, Other, Community and the Environment, Ancestors and the Spirit World, and the Divine, which also comes to expression in the 'M.E.S.A.' practice as one of the basic tools of *Movement Medicine*.

## 7.2 Ecstatic dance

As we have seen in Chapter 3, there are various types of trance states and, depending on technique and context, also different ways these states are experienced (Morris, 2006: 37). Whether these altered states are a *prerequisite* for spiritual experiences or whether they are a religious or spiritual experience in themselves, is both dependent on how individuals perceive these states, and on the definitions of religious or spiritual experience. In *Movement Medicine*, states of ‘expanded consciousness’ are frequently experienced. Participants describe qualities such as being wholly present in the moment leading for example to absence of thoughts, a sense of expansion or dissolving into the cosmos, a distortion of time and space, experiences of non-duality and a loss of sense of self or ego. It furthermore may include a personal encounter with the divine and a deep sense of oneness and interconnection with and love for others and creation (compare Czikszenmihalyi, 1975; Eliade, 1972 [1951]; Hume, 2007; Maslow, 1994). Some descriptions of these states on the dance floor are given below:

Suddenly I was not there. I was in the universe. I was inside, and suddenly there was expansion, you know, ‘where am I, where am I?’ And it was like... I was able to go really deep inside myself, I was able to expand, in a way that I wasn’t making the connection, but I was in the universe. I was there, and suddenly “ it was the same thing. It was like no-thinking. (...). That shifting really allows you to be one, there are no dualities within you, and there are no dualities outside you. So suddenly, you feel one with everyone who is on that dance floor. And at the same time you feel one with everything that is around, the world.

Paloma, interview 24.11.07

... being completely in the flow of your dance, without thinking, just experiencing your body to move, by itself seemingly. Or, blending so well in a dance with another person, or group, that you find yourself losing awareness of time and space and doing things you didn’t think you could or would.

Anonymous, interview 12.01.09

As I danced and repeated the mantra<sup>180</sup> to my self I went deeper and deeper into trance. I started to fly. My feet moving my body in ways I couldn't hope to do consciously. And then came a moment that was so wonderful I suddenly felt my heart open in a new way. BANG!!!! My eyes opened and I was facing the centre seeing the other dancers feeling their radiant heart light and at the same time knowing / feeling that I was projecting my heart light too. I felt so open to the beauty of the other people and yet staying in my own heart. I usually find that so difficult to do. I'm either in my heart (alone) or I'm sucked into concerns about everyone else. But here I was poised in relation to my own heart and in relation to other hearts.

David, newsletter 12.07

For experienced dancers, the dance can be seen not just as a technique to *reach* an altered state of consciousness, but as an altered state of consciousness in itself. The awareness, the mind and the body have been trained to drop into simply being present in the body from the first movement on the dance floor, focussing with one's entire being on opening, calling, connecting and remembering. Although this is certainly not unusual (according to Maslow, most people have 'peak experiences' 'easily and often' (1994: 29), also in very ordinary situations), this does not mean that such experiences always happen for every dancer, nor that ritual and dance are the only places where such experiences occur (compare Ehrenreich, 2007: 257-8; Maslow, 1994). However, the fact that most people seem to be able to access such experiences raises questions about the fluidity of the (extra)ordinary. Even though trance experiences also have firm roots in western culture (Ehrenreich, 2007), they have become 'other', often feared, marginalised and ridiculed, rather than integrated as an inherent part of human possibility. As Karen Armstrong writes: "It seemed that transcendence was just something that human beings experienced and that there was nothing supernatural about it" (Armstrong, 2004: 191).

Within *Movement Medicine* however, trance experiences are generally seen as positive, creating an opportunity for surrender, healing, community and interconnection. Susannah Darling Khan compares trance to falling "into a deep pool of blessing" and writes: "We become instruments, offering it all up, giving it all physical, emotional, conscious, connecting it all into the wider web. And we

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<sup>180</sup> From the Song 'Roots' by Shimshai "My roots are deep, my heart is open, in a spirit of devotion" which was played earlier in the workshop.

return to our ‘selves’ washed clean, infused and connected with a wider bigger energy than can exist in who we think we are” (newsletter 03.07). Some people however, experience the sense of loss of self that is associated with trance as dangerous or scary. Relinquishing control is not seen as favourable by everyone, and is sometimes feared as an unknown experience from which a safe return seems unsure:

I’ve had a trance experience of being the entire ocean. At that time (and a few times since) I felt that I could release something – some part of me – into being that huge, and that it would be blissful and beautiful and I would gain great wisdom. But I don’t feel ready to explore that far (...). It may be that there would be no way back. I’m not expecting that to mean death or insanity (although either would be possible) but more such a change in perspective that I wouldn’t recognise the person I am now. It may simply be that I lack the courage to be that big.

Lunar, interview 15.11.08

This fear of trance is, according to Sian Sullivan, also recognised among Khoesaaan peoples from Namibia. Although highly valued, they consider trance dancing as an act of bravery to face a mini-death when “temporarily relinquishing the power of the rational mind over the body, as well as undertaking possibly fearful metaphysical journeys to a powerful ‘other world’” (Sullivan, 2006: 236). Experiencing the dance as ‘dark’ and ‘frightening’ can also be a ‘spiritual emergence’ (Grof & Grof, 1986), and is indeed recognised as such by participants once they have emerged from it and “come out on the other side” (Lunar, interview 15.11.08). Being “rooted in the body” is seen as an asset for creating a positive experience with trance and also as necessary for ‘bringing home’ transcendental experiences. Several people mention the necessity of ‘grounding’ oneself before leaving a class, for example through doing something practical, like helping the teaching team to clear up.

### 7.3 Collective ecstasy

The awareness of connection and interconnection with the larger community of life on earth in ecstasy as described above can arise individually, yet may also be invoked collectively, as we have seen in Chapter 4. Inspired by indigenous dancing including ecstatic dance traditions in European history, *Movement Medicine* includes moments of shared repetitive movements, either in small groups or with the entire group. In this way, the dialogue between individuality and unity is included, not unlike the ideal and experience of ‘Unity and Acceptance of Diversity’ (UAD) in the Rave subculture (see for example Rill, 2006). Mirjam describes how she experiences the collective dance:

One of the most incredible experiences is when you are in a group with many, many dancers, and a collective flow emerges. It doesn't matter if you're with 300 people or with five, it is almost as if it is just one body moving. That could expand indefinitely. Being one, in a hall full of people, is a miraculous feeling. It also grows beyond that space for me, beyond that hall. It includes my family, loved ones, the people I meet daily, the animals.... I feel connected with the whole world around me, also with those not directly present. (...) It brings me in touch with so much love, without it becoming swampy, or wafty, or idealised. It's very real.

Mirjam, interview 22.11.07

For some people however, it can have an opposite effect of alienation or isolation. Some experience resistance to this collective energy, appreciating this form of dance especially for its emphasis on free personal improvisation without prescribed forms and instead on finding and following one's ‘own’ dance. Also, not everyone finds structured exercises easy or enjoyable. In those cases, while struggling to get the step it is hard to relax back into the dance and the collective field. It does take courage, stability, strength, and sufficient trust to surrender to the group. Susannah Darling Khan observes that this brings up various kinds of resistance for people such as fears of losing oneself and one's individuality, of not fitting in, of rejection, of failure and not being good enough, of being abandoned when not joining in, or of being overwhelmed by the group (interview 28.01.10). When working with this

dichotomy in a sensitive way, stressing that people are free to leave the unity at any time and explaining why this sense of unity is included in *Movement Medicine*, she actually perceives in groups “a huge longing to belong and to be part of this ‘we’,” and the permission to relax in that (interview 28.01.10).

These feelings of oneness and unity between dancers and the world around them, are a contemporary expression of Durkheim’s and Turner’s notions of ritually induced passion and group ecstasy (Ehrenreich, 2007: 2-3), which they considered a natural and universal part of social existence, featuring in many rituals (Olaveson, 2001: 103). Olaveson (2001) describes in detail the similarities between Durkheim’s ‘collective effervescence’ and Turner’s ‘communitas’. Both refer to collective, intense emotional surges or ecstasy within a group, having a de-differentiating, equalising character among their participants. One of the crucial points is that it is “immediate, spontaneous, and of the now” with only a temporary existence (Olaveson, 2001: 107), which compares to Maslow’s peak experiences (Maslow, 1994). Besides collective dancing as a way of dealing with or preparing for challenges of daily life (Ehrenreich, 2007), shared feelings of love and solidarity raised through the dance were traditionally acknowledged for generating creativity, stability and group cohesion by reinforcing collective representations and recreating moral and spiritual life. However, they could also be potentially destructive or dangerous for a culture’s social and normative structures (Olaveson, 2001: 102, 107). If ‘communitas’ ceased to be a marginal or liminal state and be made into a daily experience, the danger of despotism and manipulation could arise and be destructive of civilisation (Ehrenreich, 2007: 11, 221). *Movement Medicine* too acknowledges the ‘shadow’ sides of unity as conformity and the “power of the mob” (Susannah Darling Khan, interview 23.10.08). As *Movement Medicine* is not a closely-knit ‘community’ in the traditional sense of the word in which people share work, leisure and sacred times,<sup>181</sup> there is little danger for upsetting a pre-existing cultural status quo. However, social and normative structures ‘back home’ can be challenged through experiences on the dance floor, upturning an existing status quo in areas of personal and family life, work and general ways of living life.

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<sup>181</sup> See for a discussion of work, play and leisure Turner (1982: 30-41).

If those structures are in need of change, upturning them is not necessarily a bad thing. When entering the ‘cauldron’ in states of turmoil, disconnection, or with a longing for meaning, people may experience a deep motivation and willingness to make changes in their lives. Although liminal experiences indeed seem to be necessary for conceptual innovations and creative insights regarding the development and direction of cultures and individual lives (see also Samuel, 1990), they also need to be translated into ordinary daily life structures. This is the purpose of *Movement Medicine*’s third ‘Journey of Responsibility’ and the concept of the ‘Dancing Warrior’, which will be the focus of the next and last chapter.

#### **7.4 Accessing other knowledge**

Whether individual or collective, moving in these altered states of consciousness somehow enables people to access ‘other’ knowledge than that which they normally relate to their rational mind and thinking processes (compare de Quincey, 2002). This includes both knowledge that they attribute to their intuition or ‘inner compass’ which for some reason has become obscured, and knowledge that they perceive as existing outside of them in a larger field of consciousness. This raises questions regarding the nature and location of concepts such as mind, consciousness, intuition, soul and spirit, especially whether these are contained within the body or extend beyond the skin, and how these wider, maybe even universal ‘fields’ or information sources, can be accessed (Damasio, 1999; de Quincey, 2005; Keeney, 2005; Radin, 1997; Roney-Dougal, 1991; Sheldrake, 1988). Both art and spiritual techniques are considered vehicles to access a larger ‘relational’, ‘sacred’ or ‘universal’ mind (D. Halprin, 2003: 105; Keeney, 2005: 39). “This broader mind touches, awakens, and deepens our connection with one another and brings us *inside* the mind of nature, and ecology that holds diverse ways of knowing and being” (Keeney, 2005: 39, emphasis added). This view assumes that there is a larger ‘mind’ or ‘field of information’ that can be accessed in altered states. The information that *Movement Medicine* participants reach or receive often has a visionary quality. Not necessarily ‘spiritual’ in itself, the way

this information has come about and its nature, symbolism, clarity and intensity are often, although not exclusively, attributed to the sacred or liminal space created on the dance floor, and received through the moving body. As Katheryn writes in the newsletter:

To dance is to know, for our body holds all the secrets and when we move (...) we allow those secrets to emerge and come to consciousness. Our deep knowing is formed on the breath and freed as we move and breathe, listen and become present to that which desires expression through us. A hand that glides like a bird and spreads wings to fly. A foot that holds the earth and feels her pulse in the beat of blood. A head that bends to an emotion that arises spontaneously and lets flow the well of tears. A heart that lifts and falls with the wave of music and feels its Soul. To dance is a prayer, not just for God but for our self; for our awakening to our Self and all that we can be; the innermost core of self.

To dance is to be and to become.

Katheryn, newsletter 05.08

Hume (2007) describes how accessing knowledge, gaining insight into ‘higher truths’ and seeking a union with the divine through dance and movement are also recognised within the Sufi tradition of the whirling dervishes (Hume, 2007: 63-8). The Sufi practice aims to attain a state “where the mind is emptied of all distracting thoughts and focused on one’s innermost centre, where one is closest to the Divine and can be filled with the presence of God,” or in other words “an emptying of the self so that ‘true reality’ may enter” (Hume, 2007: 67). This enables participants to have “a direct experience of the Reality or Truth, *al haqq*, or Allah” (ibid., italics in original). What Hume calls ‘annihilation of self’ and ‘elimination of ego’ (2007: 67) is sometimes also called ‘ego-death’. *Movement Medicine* participants refer to this as loss of self(-awareness) or self-consciousness, closely related to an expansion into a bigger and wider ‘field’ or ‘force’, which can even stretch out to the natural world, the spirit world or the universe.<sup>182</sup> The loosening of the

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<sup>182</sup> Hume’s overview of elements of ecstatic dance (total involvement, slow build up, careful preparation of the body, an ‘opening’ up to something and/or something coming in or going out of the body, a change of perception of time and physical sensations, feeling one with the Divine, healing possibilities, an absence of strain and tension, a transcendence of the ordinary and a “communion with something other than the mundane” (Hume, 2007: 75) overlaps with descriptions of *Movement Medicine* participants (and also with the concepts of ‘Flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) and ‘peak experience’ (Maslow, 1994)). Differences however are that these experiences in their case



personality seems in this case both a prerequisite for and an effect of the altered state of consciousness that, in turn, leads to the possibility of accessing other knowledge. Ruth describes:

Feeling that deeply exquisite sense of being connected, with everybody and with myself. And I'm giving and receiving totally in a state of blissful sensitivity. (...) And in that space, in that time, I feel totally complete, and connected with a much bigger force or sense of being that for me those moments, they are amazing. That's expanded. And it sometimes more internal than external. A sense of lack of self-consciousness, and more of a sense of consciousness. That borderline between where my edges go and I'm not looking at myself dancing.

Ruth, interview 04.03.09

Participants describe 'higher truths' discovered in the dance, related to personal beliefs and patterns (such as insights about self-love, masculinity/femininity, scarcity/abundance), recognition of soul loss and restoration, ancestral and family history, cultural patterns and mechanisms, insights into the nature of life and growth cycles (cyclic, spiral, birth growth, decay, death), acceptance of mortality and 'befriending' death, cosmic experience of oneness and interconnection and encounters with the divine, and receiving a specific calling. Besides the sense of 'home' and 'belonging' to a group of like-minded people (often called 'tribe'), one of the 'realisations' or "reminders of true nature" is a growing awareness of a connection and interdependence with the larger community of life on this earth. This will be discussed in more detail in the last section of this chapter.

## 7.5 Dancing with Spirit Beings

Besides spontaneous insights in a state in which the rational mind is "out of the way" and knowledge can drop in or rise to the surface almost accidentally, another way of accessing 'other' knowledge is through intentional interaction with 'spirit

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are not necessarily attained through controlled, repetitive and regulated movements, nor through a life-long dedication to and immersion in certain esoteric teachings, as is the case in most practices Hume describes. She does recognise inner development, "knowledge of esoteric teachings" and experience in the practices as vital for reaching these states (Hume, 2007: 68).

beings' which can manifest, as discussed in Chapter 3, in different forms and contexts (Morris, 2006: 15). Aside from possible encounters with spirits during specific exercises, participants may have their own, spontaneous encounters, which can be experienced in different ways such as visuals (shapes and/or colours), sounds, and feelings. Some participants speak of "being taken over" by the dance rather than 'directing' the dance: "I'm not dancing, the dance is dancing through me" (Victor, interview 25.09.08), or "being moved by the space" (Anonymous, interview 20.11.08).<sup>183</sup> Another example:

I felt as if there was a wind in the room that moved me. So I was moved by the space. And it felt like a physical slight movement. And it also felt like the space moved directly through me. As if my atomic structure had very slightly loosened. Not a wind, more a breeze. It was as if a breeze blew through my body. As if my body had stopped being solid. And I was swaying very slightly and I felt as if I was totally held by the space. That I wasn't holding myself up is how I experienced that.

Anonymous, interview 20.11.08

In our culture at large the language of spirits or gods being immanent in the human being has somehow disappeared (Samuel, 1990: 134), so that we now think of this language as 'poetic' (see also Samuel, 2001: 74). Any aims to reunite these apparent opposites again are generally not taken very seriously in societies that are governed by a more rational modal state (Samuel, 1990: 135). Samuel described several examples, such as Tibetan tantric deities (ibid.: 129) and entities of the Yoruba in West Africa (ibid.: 133), in which spirits are considered to have their own temperament, generating a specific atmosphere and mood and are not just recognised as external forces but also as "'states' that the individual can enter into" (ibid.). He also draws a comparison with the classic Greek and Roman gods and goddesses who were considered both as "forces within the world because they were forces within the minds of human beings" (ibid.: 135). These were not considered as distinct, but rather formed a unity or a continuum. This is similar to my personal experience with *Movement Medicine*, in which the integration of spirit concepts,

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<sup>183</sup> For a discussion of spirit possession, see for example Ehrenreich (2007), Hume (2007), Jankowsky (2007), Keeney (2007), Morris (2006) and Samuel (2008).

language and encounters feels so natural, that I do not experience any duality or discontinuity. The practice provides an opportunity to literally ‘dance’ with and explore these possibilities and enter a state of awareness in which these are accessible.

## **7.6 Across Time: dancing with evolution, ancestors and past life memories**

Certain *Movement Medicine* exercises, especially those based on Hellinger’s ‘Family Constellations’ described in §2.1.5, open a space for accessing a field of ancestral information that can be personal as well as cultural, while again this may also occur spontaneously. The dancer can for example be asked to imagine their ancestors behind them, turn around to face them and then be invited to step ‘into’ them, giving that dancer’s body to the ancestors (field notes 24.09.07). Participants describe ‘physical’ experiences or recollections of ancestral memories that have been passed down through family history such as “being danced by” or “their bodies being taken over by” a parent or a grandparent, including the emotions and posture of that specific person. Emma writes about an experience during a workshop specifically dedicated to working with ancestors:

The dance began to flow and take form. As a silent witness I followed these moves, I let them take over, allowed them out and into motion. These moves were mine but not completely of me. I recognised my fight in this dance but I had an awareness that it spanned further than my lifetime (Emma, newsletter 02.08).

Through the movements that came, Emma felt the restrictions of “society, religion and unhappy marriages” that were “handed down from mother to daughter,” and also gained an understanding of how this has impacted her own life. Kneeling, feeling defeated, trapped and oppressed, she realised how her ancestors had been unable to fight back. Realising this, her movements changed into rage and an awareness that through her dance she could “change and break this pattern,” with a sense of “power that growls in the dark, it is ancient and secret, ferocious and magnificent” (Emma, newsletter 02.08). After the workshop, she visited her

mother, who confirmed these feelings from her own experience. Emma felt that healing took place, both in the present and in the past, so that “there could only be a new future path for the women to come” (Emma, *ibid.*). Henk describes a danced experience through seven generations of his father’s family line, with different ‘atmospheres’ and ‘energies’ in each generation, understanding some of the fear and anxiety they had gone through, while finding gratitude, strength, and release for his ancestors, himself and his daughter (Henk, letter 05.07.10).

It is arguable that this is not ‘just imagination’. Contemporary dance pioneer Martha Graham spoke of a ‘blood memory’ which is accessible through the body, spanning back thousands of years, starting with our parents and grandparents (Graham, 1973: 9-10). Somehow, a connection seems to be established with the ‘knowing field’ of the ancestral family system (D. B. Cohen, 2006: 226). Also, rituals can dissolve the boundaries of time and place, self and other (Turner, 2007 [1969]) and can blur “the line between memory and imagination” (Rountree, 2006: 104).

Although less frequently mentioned, some participants also report working with past life memories, which can be accessed and, if necessary, liberated through movement. For example, Julia (interview 20.06.08) explicitly describes experiences that she has “no memory of, from this present life,” and which she therefore interprets as past life experiences, such as for example deep despair of losing the person she loved, and a realisation she herself was going to die and being buried alive. When accessing past experiences, whether from this life or past lives, she says that her range of movement and expression expands, because she embodies more of who she is and has been. These experiences, or *memories* of experiences, provide insights for her to learn from and release.

### **Concluding remarks: dance as a *moving* spirituality**

As we have seen, the dance enables people to access other states of consciousness that reveal connections that we are not normally so acutely aware of. Perhaps, these connections are already within us, in our cells and bones, but they are largely

unconscious. Through movement, these connections and this other knowing are drawn into the conscious awareness of the dancers, where the connections can then settle, in the body, in emotional awareness and in the mind. Dance so emerges as a *moving* spirituality in four different ways. First of all, as an embodied spirituality that is experienced through movement rather than through more static forms. Various participants recognise that spiritual practices often seem to focus either on transcendent experiences, searching for meaning and god outside of oneself, or on embodied experiences, rooting spirituality within the body. The experiences described in this chapter show that these two ‘polarities’ can be combined in and accessed through movement. Secondly, through the body and the dance, people experience and express the whole range of human emotions. They often find themselves moved unexpectedly by feelings of joy, pleasure, love, hope and compassion, but equally by feelings of vulnerability and the tenderness of life, possibly combined with despair for the environment and future generations. Again, through the *embodied* experience, people are touched, moved by spirit. Spirituality so becomes a lived and living embodied experience rather than an abstract, external, metaphysical, transcendent concept. Thirdly, dancing can move a practitioner from one state to another, for example from a perceived disconnection to an experience of connection within self (for example between body and mind), and/or between self and the world around; from isolation to unity; from duality to oneness; from merged to distinct, from homogenous to diverse. Without preference for either end of a polarity, dance can create an increased awareness of the complementary nature of the seemingly opposite poles and as such contributes to an increased spectrum of expression. These first three understandings of dance as a *moving* spirituality together lead to the forth and final one. We can also understand moving in the sense of changing, changing both the internal ‘landscape’ and perceptions of the practitioner and their external choices and actions for a different life style, spirituality and political awareness. This potential for change will be the focus of the next chapter.



## Chapter 8: The ‘Dancing Warrior’ integrating the ‘Medicine’

In the Dance, I dare what I do not dare in the rest of my life. Then, sometimes, having lived through my action and its consequences in the dance, I can take that action wherever else it's needed and know that I will cope with what comes. It's like a trial run! That sounds like there's a clear distinction for me between 'life' and 'the Dance', but there isn't. My life is my Dance. And all the dancing I do is just another part of my life.

Lunar, interview 15.11.08

In many cultures, dance activity is an integral part of life, for men and women, for young and old. According to anthropologist Harold Courlander for example (1972) Haitians recognise secular and religious dancing, and dancing in between these two polarities. Dance on Haiti is very consciously integrated in everyday life, and not seen as separate activity. The reasons for dancing include dancing for spirits, honouring ancestors, relieving work, celebrating the building of new house, welcoming a guest or sending the dead on their way. “Dance is a positive statement of life. It sets forces into motion. It is not only expressive, but creative. It has powers to cure and vitalize, to appease and to aggravate, to satisfy and discover” (Courlander, 1972: 43). That dance can infuse daily life in many different ways is not only inherent to indigenous cultures. Fiona Buckland's book on improvised social dancing in contemporary club culture (2002) describes how dance holds “potential to transform and transcend. How it links the everyday to the utopic. How it helps to remember the past and imagined possibilities for the future” (F. Buckland, 2002: 1). Another contemporary example is Rave culture which often creates a lasting sense of acceptance and inner peace that is carried from the Rave experience back into the external social world (Rill, 2006). There is a wide agreement among dance researchers and dance therapists that dancing, and possibly even *watching* dance, can reshape practices, behaviours, worldviews, beliefs and ideas. It can revolutionise psychological perceptions, ways of being together and in the world, and one's outlook on life (F. Buckland, 2002: 181; Cohen Bull, 1997; D. Halprin, 2003; Hanna, 1988a; Rill, 2006; Williams, 2004).

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, these assumptions and observations could nearly seamlessly be translated to *Movement Medicine*, and are therefore, I believe, inherent to dance as a medium in general rather than to specific forms of dance. However, *Movement Medicine* does offer a way of life for those who choose to commit themselves to becoming a ‘Dancing Warrior’. This does not necessarily mean a ‘Dancing *Movement Medicine* Warrior’, although this practice provides the tools, encouragement and community for that. This chapter discusses how participants integrate the key dance experiences from the previous chapters into their daily lives. This can be compared to transforming life into a sacred art (Juhan, 2003). Some of the changes appear immediately on the dance floor, whereas others only become apparent through facing familiar situations in which the participant has the possibility to respond to them in a different way. Changes with regard to self, relationships, work and embodied spirituality in action are mentioned most by participants. For some it has not fundamentally changed their outlook on life, but rather reinforced the way in which they already looked at things, confirmed certain (tentative, nascent or already strongly embodied) beliefs, for others it has been shockingly life changing.

## 8.1 Building a Bridge

The last stage of Victor Turner’s model of Rites of Passage is the ‘aggregation’ or ‘integration’ phase in which the initiand returns to ordinary daily life, incorporating his or her experiences (2007 [1969]: 94). *Movement Medicine* workshops actively articulate and structure the start of this process and consciously prepare participants for the return home towards the end of a workshop. This process often starts with creative writing, distilling the experience, insights and understandings of the workshop into words, then rephrased in for example a short three-line poem, called a ‘haiku’, as we have seen in Chapter 4. From this, participants are invited to distil ‘incantations’, which are short sentences formulated in the present tense, which are already unquestionably ‘true’, and will help change thoughts and beliefs. It is assumed that strongly *feeling* the emotion behind the words and finding a simple



gesture to express it in motion as well, encourages the ‘message’ to sink in simultaneously on the levels of body, heart and mind. Sometimes this is witnessed in a ceremonial space. People are encouraged to keep working with these as often and as patiently as possible,<sup>184</sup> and to translate their insights into small, concrete steps. They may be asked to formulate what steps they will take in the hour after finishing the workshop, in the week after, and in the month after. The message is always to take feasible steps which can be accomplished easily when taking one step at the time, such as: “If you want to climb the mount Everest, start with exercising on the hill behind your house. If you want to play guitar, start with buying or renting one and find a tutor or a self-instruction book” (field notes 26.11.09). To get an idea of this, here are some examples of this from participants of the ‘Journey of Empowerment 2009’:

Name	Incantation	Translation into small steps
Anon. (male)	I am a potent, beautiful man, who wholeheartedly offers his gifts and welcomes abundance with open arms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Smile with love at my reflection for a minute each day</li> <li>- Honour my body with at least three cardiovascular activities per week</li> <li>- I will seek new work which feeds me more</li> <li>- Food meditation once a day</li> <li>- Gratitude for 10 things at end of each day</li> </ul>
Janelle	I communicate my open, loving heart confidently and clearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Whenever I am asked something about myself, I will breathe and then respond openly and confidently.</li> <li>- Will express at least one thing from my heart to the universe or to someone each day, clearly and confidently.</li> <li>- Will remind myself each morning by looking in the mirror and saying “I have an open loving heart and I communicate clearly and confidently.</li> </ul>
Anon. (male)	<p>I share love</p> <p>I nourish myself with healthy food</p> <p>I am focused and effective at work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I give compliments with a smile</li> <li>- I look in the eyes when I speak</li> <li>- I speak to the opposite sex</li> <li>- I eat fruits as snack</li> <li>- I eat slowly (possibly enjoying it)</li> <li>- I get in the mensa clockwise</li> <li>- I finish what I start</li> <li>- I avoid interruptions</li> </ul>

<sup>184</sup> Ya’Acov Darling Khan uses a metaphor for this, reminding people it takes a nine month period of gestation before birth, implying not to expect results too soon (field notes 07.03.09).

		- I schedule my time in the morning
Ewa	I am fragile and soft	- I touch my face with love while putting some cream/ beauty masque etc.
		- I tell myself how much I love myself with everything which is in me
	I am empowered	- I give myself time to do simple, beautiful things
		- I speak in a calm manner
		- I consider my decision, I act when I know how,
		- I ask questions judge in my heart (feeling), judge in my head (logic), I make decision

*Table 4: Incantations translated into small steps*

Themes that are mentioned often are related to receiving and expressing love, honouring the body, affirming self-love and appreciation, recognising beauty in self and others, manifesting work that suits the personal dream, vision or calling, emphasising gratitude, practicing clear communication including vulnerability and emotions, and self-realisation and empowerment. The above quotations include two men and two women. It is interesting that both men wanted to be anonymous and also that their themes seem more pragmatically focussed on the outside world (communication and work) than on their ‘inner life’, although both aim to appreciate food and gratitude. The incantations are in line with the assumptions and cosmology of *Movement Medicine*, and the things that are mentioned relate to the structures, exercises and language of the practice. This may mean that the unspoken gives an equal indication to the essence of *Movement Medicine*. The incantations affirm such concepts as care and respect for self and others, responsible speech and actions, empowerment, responsibility and self-actualisation. As these statements are initially written in private without external need for reaffirming the practice’s assumptions, it seems that participants have internalised them.

Another exercise invites participants to imagine themselves back home, seeing themselves embody and enact the newly envisioned ways, then seeing this *vision* of themselves “winking back at them” in that particular moment. When they are home and actually taking this intended action, they can *physically* “wink back at themselves” as they winked forwards to themselves in the workshop. It is a playful metaphor for connecting or ‘bridging’ the two experiences of workshop and

life back home (field notes 04.03.09). It is also recognised that insights will continue to trickle in after the ending of a workshop.

Despite these exercises, it is not always easy to make the transition back to ordinary 'non-workshop' life after the atmosphere of supporting community during workshops. For some people it feels as if certain pieces of the jigsaw puzzle have fallen into place, which can lead to the 'old life' with the 'old ways' seemingly not quite fitting anymore, as if it seemed to 'itch'. This can soon become unbearable, and change becomes necessary. Also, the conditions at home can be perceived as rougher, more challenging and sometimes less supportive. Mirjam (newsletter 10.07) compares the safe and nourishing conditions of a workshop with "planting a seed in a greenhouse (...). The soil is fertile and it is warm. It's a good place to grow first gentle roots, to explore the ground and to unfold some delicate leaves." During the workshop there is support and encouragement from the teacher and fellow participants, at home one needs to draw this inspiration and the strength to facilitate this from within oneself. However, as Mirjam recognises, home is, almost like a litmus test, "the place to really embody, to unfold more and to blossom, a place to become firm and to root the practice in life" (newsletter 10.07).

Hans B. describes how, in his early days of dance workshop experiences, the insights evaporated in one or two days after coming home, then becoming 'stuck' again in old habits and reactions. After about ten years of intense practice, experiences finally stay with him for a longer period of time (Hans B., interview 04.09.08). He describes his inner sense of strength becoming more and more tangible over the years, although he still does not quite trust himself in really letting go of sometimes old and 'stubborn' patterns. However, he actively recalls and draws strength from the workshop experiences, and also finds encouragement in the contact with peers. Susannah Darling Khan recognises this part of the process, and regularly refers to a Hopi saying to remind people that:

Remember when you forget, when you fall down, just get up and choose again the way you have chosen. Eventually you create a new pathway for yourself. Hopi saying: "I dance, I fall down, I get up again, I go on dancing, I dance, I fall down, I get up again, I go on dancing, I fall down, I get up again, I go on dancing, I fall down, I get up again, I go on dancing..."

(Susannah Darling Khan, 'Journey of Empowerment 2009', integration letter).

This is at the same time a recognition of the tendency to 'relapse' into old habits and patterns, as well as an encouragement to not let the process be thwarted by that.

## 8.2 Body

The changes that happen over time, especially after or in between dance workshops, include firstly concrete physical changes such as losing weight, becoming fitter, stronger and more flexible, increased health, paying more attention to personal body care and physical needs, less pain or having a different relationship to pain. Secondly, with regard to body image, people describe a greater appreciation of the body, changing the habitual (usually criticising, annihilating or destructive) relationship with the body into something more positive and beneficial, including stopping self-harm and overcoming eating disorders. Of course we cannot deduce whether the dance was the sole contributor to this, but several participants describe it as such. Some women describe feeling a stronger connection to femininity that in turn leads to a greater sense of personal power. Thirdly, over time people recognise changes in their body postures and alongside the fact that they register a changed outlook on life, although it is hard to pinpoint which came first. The body being straighter, less stooped, chin held high and feet firmly planted on the ground result in similar changes in the personality. This includes increased body confidence, becoming less self-conscious, and feeling comfortable in one's own skin. Fourthly, people experience a greater sense of embodiment that gives more self-confidence and also affects the bodily presence with others. Having more access to oneself and being more aware of body language results in relating more easily with others. Kristina Maria Hafner's MA dissertation on the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> (2008) includes an interesting table about dancers' body images before they danced the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> and how they perceive themselves later, after practicing for a while. People describe themselves as more mobile and lively, more defined, others more dissolved and multi-dimensional, freer, clearer, lighter, better

coordinated, more symmetrical or more asymmetrical, and stronger, more bright and colourful, more flexible and expressive, straighter and more open, expanded (in the sense of a bigger presence), more grounded, feeling a better balance between head and body, more aware of their core or centre and their boundaries (Hafner, 2008: 119).

People describe an increased ability to effectively manage themselves in a complex world, to navigate processes and emotions more skilfully. They report an increased access to supportive resources inside and outside. These resources include first and foremost the body, described by participants as the ‘vehicle’ or ‘home’ of the soul, in which they increasingly feel ‘at home’. In general people start to look after the body in a more conscious way, and are able, through the resource of the dance, to deal with physical illness and self-destructive behaviour, so increasing their experience of health. We have seen how people deal with depression and HIV. Some also find the courage, the will and the tools to deal with self-harm, eating disorders, alcohol and drug addictions, and cancer. These are long-term effects of integrating the dance in daily life and continue long after workshops have ended.

### **8.3 Self**

People describe a process of getting to know oneself more thoroughly, through becoming aware of unconscious parts (Jo, interview 22.05.08) and including parts of the self that were previously unacknowledged (Mirjam, interview 22.11.07). Through what Lunar describes as “the constant daring to push within the Dance” (interview 15.11.08), people explore their limitations and boundaries, and find them further away than they had previously believed. Knowing, accepting and acknowledging both strengths and weaknesses, is what people call “arriving in oneself.” This sense of self seems to create an increased ability to cope with unforeseen and/or familiar events, both internally and externally (Hans B., interview 04.09.08). This includes dealing with insecurity, tolerating the unknown, and dealing with apparent failure and mistakes. It literally ‘gives body’ to accept

and integrate that which seemingly cannot be resolved. Although there are “dark nights of the soul” as we have seen in Chapter 6, these developments generally lead to greater acceptance and self-compassion, increased self-esteem, self-love and self-confidence. This process is compared to taking up the ‘crown’ of one’s own ‘authority’ and includes valuing oneself enough to “being true to oneself” when discovering a personal need or calling. Elloa for example describes about finally daring to follow a dream she had for a long time:

I’d been putting it off, and putting it off, and putting it off, and I realised, if I don’t do this, I’m basically betraying myself, selling myself short basically. So the meaning that it has given my life is that, you know this saying “if you don’t stand for something, you will fall for anything.”

Elloa, interview 15.11.09

This is linked to an increased awareness and appreciation of intuition as inner resource to which people start to listen more and act accordingly. They describe an increased sense of trust and through that, feeling more supported by life. Ruth compares intuition to a ‘compass’ with which she navigates through life, combined with metaphorical reminders of the practice at decision moments. When I asked how she perceives this, she explained:

Maybe part of the map is around the personal intentions that I set. And so in the choices that I make, and in the way I’m trying to bring myself to relationship, in the choices I make to where I put my energy, in my working life, how I’m viewing my ancestors and my own story, how I’m viewing my ability to influence my life, so not feeling a victim of it. So on all levels it feels like being facilitated to go through a process in a kind of sacred space, to look at those things outside of daily life, those things almost become powerful totems, like having a thing in my pocket, that then is a measurer. It’s standing next to me. And it’s standing next to me in helping me bring who I bring, but also it’s standing next to me when I don’t quite manage that. If one of my understudies are coming out, like “I’m not good enough,” I actually feel that the totem is quite strong then. So I don’t any longer stay very long in that process. So that part of the map is like pulling me back to a path, that, outside of the clutter sometimes I’ve consciously found. Maybe. So it’s like a pure map. A compass. A compass with your amulets in your pocket.

Ruth, interview 04.03.09

Some of these images are derived from the way the Darling Khans teach and talk about the practice, and some are images of Ruth herself. This raises an interesting question of how and what participants absorb from the *Movement Medicine* discourse. It can be compared to learning a new language, and then reframing one's experiences within that language frame (compare Luhmann, 1989). In general, it is difficult to translate inner experiences to spoken language and the use of metaphor is a way to tell in images what ordinary words may not be able to describe. Using images such as 'compass' and 'measurer' for example, which are not commonly used in *Movement Medicine*, immediately calls on concepts such as 'orientation', 'direction' and 'guiding principle'. They are assets on a journey, enabling the user to find the way (compare Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1996 [1969]: 226). The 'totem' Ruth refers to has a connotation of 'protection', but also of guardian and guide (ibid.: 1019), which is in a way similar to the guiding aspect of the compass. I believe that the use of such strong images says something about the attributed value of the practice in the experience of participants. *Movement Medicine* somehow offers very pragmatic and practical techniques to, staying with the imagery, 'navigate' life. To a certain extent, the experience would not be available without adopting the images. In other words, one has to "start speaking the speak" in order to understand what the practice is about. This language needs to be 'rehearsed' and incorporated, and when that is done, participants can come up with their own images and metaphors.

Dancing with the elements creates different relationships with concrete aspects of life. Vanessa for example, through dancing with Fire, feels more in touch with her 'inner flame', her passion, sexuality and femininity. She also got in touch with the physicality of her body, her strength and her courage. As a result she took up archery, which at the same time felt like 'becoming one' with who she is "in the deepest corners" of her being, and created an inspiring effect on her mind, through the excitement of taking up something completely new (Vanessa, newsletter 06.09). Maria's relationship to water had always been coloured by the fear of drowning. After learning to 'relax in fear' on the dance floor, her relationship with water changed into what she even describes as a "loving relationship with water." In a swimming pool, a week after an intensive dance

workshop, she started to explore her boundaries with water, taking “responsibility for myself in relationship with water in a fluid and non-tense way,” and even started to play. She relates this to how her movements affect her environment in general, using the water as metaphor for learning to set “relaxed focused boundaries in my day to day life [which] is a loving relationship with [life]” (Maria, bachelor thesis).

And finally people mention a renewed access to their creativity and inspiration as a nourishing resource. Some people discover for the first time in their lives that they have “an artist inside” who loves making things, or they get back in touch with their creativity, which previously may have been lost or repressed. Lunar for example explains: “The dance feeds into all my other creativity. It enhances and inspires my painting and writing” (interview 15.11.08). Dancer and choreographer Mary Wigman also described the dance as her medium of creativity, in which she “could invent and create,” gave “shape and profile to [her] visions,” and “worked on the human being, with the human being, and for the human being” (Wigman, 1966: 8-9). Both life and the dance mirrored for her the process of “die and arise,” and the dance was a tool to face life even when it appeared unbearable, to remain true to oneself and to obey “the law that called us into being” (ibid.). She recognised the process of human growth as learning to live and affirm life “in the creative act, to elevate and glorify it” (ibid.).

#### **8.4 Relationships**

The dance workshops for many people increase the ability of creating more authentic, deeper and more meaningful relationships with people in general. Daring to show more of themselves creates more intimacy, an increased ease and ‘fluidity’ in social relationships, clearer sense of boundaries and assertiveness (including learning to say yes and no), clearer communication (both about using the voice in a different way and communication skills) and an increased feeling of connection. Three specific categories of relationship are mentioned: those with parents and siblings, children and partners.



With regard to improved relationships with parents, people mention starting to appreciate how much love there is, even if it is not expressed very clearly, and describing a greater degree of honesty around difficult aspects of childhood (for example Mirjam, interview 22.11.07; Lunar, interview 15.11.08). These changes in relating differently to parents or childhood seem to be fuelled by a different way of looking at experiences. Mirjam for example writes about shifting the focus to positive and beneficial youth experiences rather than focussing on “the difficulties and what was missing” (newsletter 10.07). We will look at this in further detail below. Another change people notice is feeling greater compassion for their parents’ lives, their fears, dreams and longings, and hence being able to understand and ‘forgive’ some of their choices (Bea, newsletter 10.07). Others come to terms with being adopted, not knowing who (one of) one’s parents are (Julia, newsletter 10.07), or with the disappearance of a parent through death or divorce, nevertheless finding a way to reconnect with the love emanating from this parent (Matija, newsletter 11.07). For some the dance has also offered a place to work with difficult relationships with siblings, or with traumatic loss of siblings through suicide.

Secondly, people mention an improved relationship with their children. The relationship can for example become more loving and soft (Annette, newsletter 04.07; Hans B., interview 04.09.08), more connected (Nathalie, newsletter 12.08), or expressing and receiving appreciation becomes a part of the relationship (Mary, follow-up interview 19.09.08). Ruth explains how she works with the relationship with her children on the dance floor in a conscious way and the effects it has:

[Recently] I had had some issues with my daughter, who’s just becoming a teenager. And I realised during [the dance] that I’d been projecting onto her all the worries that I had as a teenager. And so part of Ritual was to walk across the fire. And I held her in my head, with my intention this thing of dancing her maidenhood and my own maidenhood and everybody’s maidenhood. And since I’ve come back there has been a complete shift in my relationship with her, or my attitude to her. I’d been getting to that point that was getting angry with her or disconnected, that was really me jumping on her a bit. So definitely the last Ritual Module has helped me shift the perspective and dance for her, with her. That was powerful. And I think I also danced to heal some of that I split up with my son’s father when he

was two (he is now 19). And then we've been co-parenting ever since, but I hold a lot of guilt around that. So I've also been able, at times, to process the sadness around that separation, and maybe around some of the times I've missed him and I wasn't able to be with him. So I've been able to process some quite deep issues, and then be able to return to those relationships in a way of understanding myself more, or being able to give. So definitely, in that way, having a lens to look at myself and my relationship with my relations, really. And my connection. That's a very powerful tool.

Ruth, interview 04.03.09

Other people describe coming to terms with being a teenage mother, and coming to terms with leaving the children after a divorce like Ruth in the quotation above.

Thirdly and finally, love relationships regarding partners are described as changing as well. This concerns either working through difficult issues with the partner, or coming to the conclusion that a choice needs to be made to temporarily pause, or leave a relationship. People describe moving out from a difficult 'unhealthy' relationship full of, for example, jealousy, abandonment issues, rejection and arguments, towards one based on love, support, kindness, honesty, intimacy and a healthy sexual exchange (a.o. Lunar, interview 15.11.08; Elloa, interview 15.11.09).

Some people are able to talk about their experiences with their families at home, others cannot share it in words. However, by relating to their loved ones in new and different ways, the relationship and space can nevertheless be affected strongly (Mirjam, newsletter 10.07; Caroline, newsletter 01.08). The effects of healing work on the wider field, influencing people who were not present in a particular healing session, is also documented with regard to, for example, shamanic cultures (Samuel, 1990: 87-9, 119; Winkelman, 2004a, 2004b) and 'family constellations' (Hellinger & Longstaff, 2001; Mason Boring, 2001), as we have seen in §2.1.5 and §3.1.2.

## 8.5 Work, Values and Action

The effects of *Movement Medicine* workshops also extend to the professional area. Through increased personal and relational skills such as being able to speak publicly, and having a different approach to existing power dynamics in the professional environment, people are able to improve the quality and enjoyment of their work environment. This can lead to improved relationships and teamwork with existing colleagues, and also to infusing an existing job with more creativity, feelings, and/or compassion. Becoming more ‘in tune’ with themselves, they may realise that they feel a new sense of direction, calling, job or vocation, which may lead to starting a new training or (self-employed) business, for example making a profession out of a hobby or passion. For some it took years to find the courage for this change of direction, or to gather the courage to leave an unsatisfactory or painful work situation. The dance experience may also develop insight into the need for different work after for example illness or burn out.

§6.5 discussed emphasising different personal values through the dance practice. Another of the values people say they hold more dear because of *Movement Medicine* is sustainability. There seem to be three reasons or motivations that make people choose to act towards a more sustainable world. The first is an embodied experience of interconnection and oneness through the dance. This gives people an awareness of “belonging to the web of life.”

That is important for me, to make that connection with the earth stronger. That really changes the way how you feel yourself. That kind of belonging. That you really are part of everything, that is inside you and is outside you. A feeling of belonging to the web.

Paloma, interview 24.11.07

Once people experienced interconnection and oneness, they “do not really have a choice but to act on it” (Sasa, interview 04.9.08). The intricate connection between self and planet, self and other species has become tangible and concrete on a physical level. Therefore, the actions that follow are motivated by what Arne Naess called ‘self-preservation’, the drive and endeavour to preserve life and survive (A.

Naess, 2005 [1953]: 101). However, it is not always clear what is ‘sustainable’ and what not as this includes issues that are ethically, politically and environmentally complex. Decisions and possibilities therefore depend partly on individual understanding, choice and resources.

Secondly, through the dance people also connect with the despair and hope for the vulnerability and delicacy of life, and with their passion for a better world and a good life for everyone. What *Movement Medicine* participants describe resembles very much what activist and teacher Joanna Macy observes in her work with empowering people in despair. In an online interview with Marie Nurrie Stearns, Macy describes how despair consists of a constellation of feelings such as “fear about the future based on what we’re doing to each other and to our planet,” anger for “knowingly wasting the world for those who come after us, destroying the legacy of our ancestors,” guilt, sorrow, grief and awareness of suffering.<sup>185</sup> By opening up to the pain people may feel for the world, the future, people and the environment, she reasons that “we open ourselves up to the web of life, and we realize that we’re not alone” (ibid.). In this recognition solidarity is a key value, as well as finding out what our resources are and emphasising restoring faith in life through group experiences which help to enhance that solidarity (compare Macy & Young Brown, 1998).

Choosing a different story does not only apply to our individual, personal stories, but also to our collective stories, which mutually influence each other (Ya’Acov Darling Khan, newsletter 05.09). This shows similarities with the adage of the Pachamama Alliance of “changing the dream of the modern world.”<sup>186</sup> Roland Wilkinson writes that for him the essence of *Movement Medicine* lies in the possibility:

that we can restructure our perception of ourselves, of our bodies, of our surroundings and of the world itself and that from this place of new perception that we can change not only aspects of our own personal lives but also bring about positive changes in society and the physical world out there beyond the dance floor.

Roland, newsletter 10.08

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<sup>185</sup> <http://www.personaltransformation.com/Macy.html>, downloaded August 4, 2011.

<sup>186</sup> <http://www.pachamama.org/about-us/origin-story>, accessed January 25, 2012.

Rather than succumbing to messages of despair, recession and fear as fuelled by many contemporary media, Ya'Acov Darling Khan writes: "We have chosen to tell the story in this life that this life is an invitation to learn from, grow with and create with any situation that the Great Choreographer chooses to send our way" (newsletter 01.09). This is done with a need for the awareness of interconnection:

Climate change, food shortages, species loss, we are accelerating into a brick wall unless we wake up and start looking at what works for the whole, for all of us, feeling our profound inter-connectedness. And to do that, we need, paradoxically, to be autonomous individuals thinking for ourselves. (...) Movement Medicine is designed both to support each individual both to strengthen their own inner honesty, authority, and responsibility, and to viscerally experience our oneness with all of life.

Susannah Darling Khan, newsletter 09.08

Somehow *Movement Medicine* creates an awareness of the current challenging times alongside a message and attitude of hope, optimism and belief in possibilities, stressing that each individual *does* make a difference. Sasa describes this as: "Don't say 'don't'" (interview 04.09.08), and Kerri speaks of a 'can do' attitude (newsletter 11.09). The combination of taking an active stance in the world, choosing "a life of the spirit" and "some sort of discipline as a source of joy" is described also by Antonio Damasio (2004: 283). This is precisely the goal of the 'Dancing Warrior' as I understand it: taking stock of a situation and responding with an active stance that includes spirit and joyfulness, by balancing facts, passion, action and hope. The 'Dancing Warrior' assumes, like Joanna Macy's definition of hope "a posture that leaves us flexible and adaptable and alive."<sup>187</sup>

The third and last motivation for change has also already been mentioned in earlier sections. Experiencing through dancing positive feelings of joy, pleasure, love and compassion, mostly create "feel good feelings" and stimulate happiness and wellbeing. In combination with the experience of profound interconnection and concern for the wellbeing of all people, participants consciously start to pray and hope for this joy to be available to everyone, and start making an effort to spread

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<sup>187</sup> <http://www.personaltransformation.com/Macy.html>, downloaded August 4, 2011.

and preserve their enjoyment of nature and life for current and future generations. Interest and active involvement in the wellbeing of others also generates a sense of meaning, which is again an intrinsic motivation for ‘doing good’ (compare Damasio, 2004).

### **Concluding remarks: from polarities to circle to sphere**

*Movement Medicine* participants become in a way encultured in the modal state of the practice as particular social system, and learn to “correspond to the standardized kinds of interactions that take place around them” in repetitive learning situations (Samuel, 1990: 76). This can be compared to Luhmann’s observation of people engaging with magical practices who adopt language and integrate practices that initially seem irrational and illogical when assessed from a rationalised western perspective (Luhmann, 1989). In the MMF, the different perspectives can flow together as different streams of meaning and understanding, without making one or other superior. Play is considered important for learning, both by Samuel (1990: 69, 76) and within *Movement Medicine*. Also specific patterns are constantly reinforced through specific interaction, roles, ways of communicating, and expressing in word and action the values that are considered central to *Movement Medicine*. Modal states are “acquired in a creative and interactive manner by an individual who has a specific and constantly developing and changing body, female or male, and who is in a specific and also constantly transforming pattern of social relationships with immediate family and community members” (Samuel, 1990: 86). Rituals can contribute to directing and shaping these factors, and even though their effect can be subtle, this may lead to “a very substantial difference in the day-to-day happiness and fulfilment of [the] individual” (Samuel, 1990: 86).

In this study on *Movement Medicine* we have encountered many dichotomies. We have seen a polarity between science and magic in the paradigms that influence the practice and the language that is used to describe experiences, for example people referring to the dance floor as a ‘cauldron’ or a ‘research

laboratory’ (compare Greenwood, 2000; Roney-Dougal, 1991). The former suggests a place of ‘magical rebirth’ and the latter a scientific approach, thoroughness, objectivity and clear results. This dichotomy is even evident in the name: ‘medicine’ reminds us of western biomedical and shamanic paradigms at the same time. We have furthermore observed polarities between embodiment and disembodiment, body and mind, rational and emotional approaches, the division between inner and outer, human and spirit world, technology and nature, form and formlessness, individual and community, unity and diversity. Life consists of opposites and polarities, without which there would be no creation. I argue however that these are all part of a larger unity. Like Samuel’s description of the inclusion of for example rationality “*within* a particular MSI” (Samuel, 1990: 63, emphasis in original) rather than its “dominance over the analysis of human thought and behaviour” (ibid.), these apparent opposites all have their place within the cultural stream of, in this case, *Movement Medicine*. So rather than questioning whether the in some places paradoxical character of the practice’s language renders incongruent *Movement Medicine*’s aim for unity and wholeness,<sup>188</sup> I understand the process as one of learning both to dance with and to integrate opposites. An excellent symbol for this unity and integration is the circle, as its design *connects* opposites. The circle also reflects on the dimension of time. Having neither beginning nor end, circles suggest eternal movement. Like the ‘Ourobouros’, or tail-eating serpent in alchemy, circles connect past, present and future through the ongoing cycles of life, death and transformation or rebirth (Jung, 1993 [1953]: 53). The circular nature unites apparent opposites, not unlike the concept of the ‘hermeneutic circle’ discussed in Chapter 1. Indeed, circular understanding emphasises *relationship* instead of object (Keeney, 2005: 27, emphasis added). The circle is therefore a powerful symbol of inclusion, connection and reconnection, although the concept of ‘reconnection’ is only necessary in state of duality: when in state of oneness, there is nothing to reconnect to because all is united. This also includes connections to all other circles: connections *within* one community and also *between* different communities worldwide.

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<sup>188</sup> Gay Watson observes that although the time of Cartesian dualism is over, it is still enacted unconsciously in daily life and popular culture (Watson, 2008: 19).

*Movement Medicine* draws the concept of the two-dimensional circle (which can include a time-dimension as we have seen in §3.2.9) to a three dimensional sphere in the ‘Star Meditation’, combining the vertical axis of body, heart, mind and soul, the horizontal (dorsal-ventral) of past, present future and the horizontal-lateral axis of self in relation to others, all communities of life on earth, and spirit. Life after all is not two- but multi-dimensional. This is also recognised by Bradford Keeney: “Life is an unbroken circle of transformed states, identities, and particularities. The lines that connect all conceivable forms make a circle of circles, a sphere like Mother Earth” (Keeney, 2005: 186).



## Conclusions

Unravelling the contribution and mechanisms of *Movement Medicine* as a tool for wellbeing and personal growth of participants has not been an easy task. Due to the complexity of the practice itself including the variety of other practices that inform it, the personal characteristics that individual practitioners bring and the nature of human growth in general, it is hard to assess what aspects or ingredients exactly contribute to the changes that participants describe and attribute to their *Movement Medicine* experience. Although the approach is still relatively ‘young’, a serious cosmology has been developed, which is expressed both on a fundamental and on a practical level in symbolism, workshops, values, ethics and actions.

This thesis provides a description and analysis of the practice and a reflection of the depth and width of its possibilities as experienced by participants, including areas of the body, emotions, mind and spirituality, and highlighting themes such as embodiment, connection, empowerment, healing and transformation. Considering the narrative ‘evidence’ we can conclude that yes, *Movement Medicine* does contribute to personal growth and wellbeing in these areas. More specifically, insights, revelations and changes that participants describe include personal beliefs and patterns, their relationship to ancestral and family history, and to cultural patterns and mechanisms. Furthermore, participants sometimes develop insights regarding job or vocation, and experience revelations regarding the nature of life, cosmic experiences of god, oneness, and universal truths, as well as various other ‘life lessons’.

The effects of the practice can be attributed first of all to the *mixture* of the many different techniques that appeal to people in different ways. This increases the number of ‘entry points’ or ‘invitation points’ for accessing meaningful experiences. These points include first and foremost the dance, but also the ceremonial and ritual aspects, the music, the voice work, the personal contact with the teachers, and the community. The practice might be criticised for incorporating too many different techniques and thus weakening its overall message or effect, but the empirical data indicate its breadth to be a strength or asset that can meet the

interests of a variety of people. Although *Movement Medicine* offers a very specific world view, its diversity keeps the possibility open for incorporating different ways of seeing self and the world, so enabling people from different backgrounds to bring and incorporate their views into the *Movement Medicine* cosmology. Also, different people need different symbols or impulses to initiate and/or enhance growth and healing, and the complexity of the mandala and movement practices may speak to a greater range of people. In other words, it may appeal to people from for example meditative Buddhist backgrounds, trance dance backgrounds and nature based shamanic backgrounds. On the other hand however, it must be recognised that the complexity of the mandala and variety of practices and exercises may also discourage people who appreciate greater simplicity and “just come to dance,” and possibly people who look for conceptual coherence that they do not immediately recognise in the diversity of the traditions that influence the practice.

Furthermore, the efficacy lies not only in the diversity of what is ‘on offer’, but is also constituted in important ways by the composition of the group. Although there is a slowly growing community of people returning on separate occasions to dance *Movement Medicine*, nevertheless, with the exception of ongoing groups, each workshop consists of a different circle of people, making each class or workshop in a sense unique. This compares to dancer, choreographer and movement pioneer Anna Halprin’s view of any event reflecting “the spirit of the collective psyche of the group,” being specific to that group at that time (Halprin 1995: 128). This includes the variety of participants’ skills, cultural backgrounds, life stages, and previous experiences. The way in which the individuals, the group and the teacher(s) hold the space for transformation of self and others is a process of co-creation: its reach and effect is dependent on who is there.

On an individual level, transformation can indeed occur at any ‘stage’ of development, can happen in one moment or be a shorter or longer ongoing process, can be catalysed due to a single experience or a combination of things (both within and outside the *Movement Medicine* ‘mesa’). It can furthermore depend on the type and severity of that which needs healing, on how much previous work the individual has already done on it, on the amount of support available, and on the

impact of the experience. Transformation furthermore comes in different intensities, ranging from gently nudging, slow simmering change to shocking, life changing rocket-like impact after which nothing seems the same anymore. Sometimes there is the one moment of sudden insight, sometimes years of dedicated practice. This compares to Jung's observation that the process of transformation "may be compressed into a single dream or into a short moment of experience, or it may extend over months and years, depending on the nature of the initial situation, the person involved in the process, and the goal to be reached" (Jung, 1971 [1959]: 38-9).

We could compare the variety of transformative experiences in *Movement Medicine* to a walk on the beach. "A walk on the beach" means many different things to different people. Imagine there are milestones indicating the distances travelled. Some people may enter the beach in the middle, and walk a short distance between two of these milestones, then retracing their steps carefully. Others may access the beach on the far side, and walk slowly but surely, mile after mile after mile, and not even return to their original starting point. Others again will hit the ground running, speeding along the shores at break neck speed, or even galloping through the surf on horseback. Some may carry bags and sit down for a picnic and enjoy good food, company and the scenery. Others will take a dip in the sea, or build sand castles with the children. Others yet again will be creatively, imaginatively inspired by sea gulls flying or by the patterns of water, wind and seaweeds on the sand. Each of these experiences is uniquely personal, and can in their own sense potentially be impact-full and life changing, or mellow and soft in their own right, and at the same time does not have to be. *Movement Medicine* is one of the frameworks that facilitate such experiences.

The real and imaginary journeys that participants experience through *Movement Medicine*, show many similarities with other traditions such as the hero's journey in literature and mythology (Joseph Campbell, 1968 [1949]: 30), psychological journeys of alchemists and of the Fool through the Tarot cards, Sufi whirling dervishes, pilgrimages and other mystical journeys, and ritual journeys through the stages of rites of passage (Turner, 1974, 1982). Heroes set off into the unknown alone, to explore what matters to them, in search of whatever it is they

yearn for. Some of these journeys concern actual, literal travelling from one place to another, but the aspect I want to stress here is the metaphorical travelling from one place in consciousness to another, learning skills and gathering tools along the way which help the traveler to arrive in him or herself more deeply. As psychologist and dancer Daria Halprin writes: “Our thirst for soul will not be quenched by travelling abroad, but by travelling inward, and, when we find ourselves, we will rediscover the world” (D. Halprin, 2003: 79). At some point, heroes return to their starting point and integrate that which was learned and experienced along the way. Through their experiences and initiations they are able to “bring something of value to the world that has been left behind” (Armstrong, 2004: 302). This is crucial: although the individual undertaking the journey benefits enormously from the whole process, the effort is not solely focussed on personal gain or improvement, but contributes to larger networks and circles. This tells us something about the reciprocity of healing work, which is an exchange, sometimes even unconscious, between the healing of self and the healing of elements of the outer world. Although the journey itself can be individual and lonely, it ultimately leads to connection rather than isolation, which compares to what Jung wrote about the individuation process leading “to more intense and broader collective relationships and not to isolation” (Jung, 1981 [1921]: 448). These views are reflected in *Movement Medicine*.

As we have seen in the Introduction, the ‘challenges’ of living in the contemporary world are ‘diagnosed’ differently from within different fields and perspectives. The remedies suggested in turn depend on the parameters and assumptions of each paradigm. They are however all motivated by a degree of dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs and include suggestions for change, while the longing for connection and reconnection seems to underlie many of the alternative approaches to and journeys through life. This interactive relationship between self and the world also lies at the basis of *Movement Medicine*, which offers many participants a framework to understand life, and tools to work with life in an empowered way. When people participate in *Movement Medicine* they subscribe to and integrate the practice to various degrees in their lives, combine it with their other practices. In terms of the multimodal framework, this influences

both their other (non-*Movement Medicine*) MSi's and MSc's and ultimately their relationship with the MSm. From a generalised perspective we have during this thesis narrowed the focus down to dance, even more specifically to *Movement Medicine*, and now is the time to open this up again to a broader perspective.

The basic mechanisms described in this *Movement Medicine* case study are relevant for society at large. Firstly because of the nature of dance, which can play an important role in and be used as a model for (re-)creating a culture. When we consciously choose membership, this generates a sense of belonging, which in turn will lead to engaged and committed contribution in order to improve that to which we belong and subscribe. Dance can also help in cementing together different factions, incorporating and uniting people into a community at a deep level (compare Ehrenreich, 2007: 24; A. Halprin, 1995: 241). Finally, it can contribute to the production of other knowledge that can ultimately influence society through arts, academia and politics (compare F. Buckland, 2002: 181; Sondra Fraleigh, 1999: 196-7). No matter how small the effect, these exchanges have the potential to enhance the general wellbeing of the population. This case study is an example of a modern day, western practice in which these characteristics of dance are highlighted.

The second reason that this thesis is relevant in broader sense is because movement, embodiment, connections with self, others and the different dimensions of our world, ritual, community and mutual recognition, opportunities for play, symbolic language and a possibility of integrating opposites are significant contributors to the creation of meaning and empowerment also *outside* the context of dance workshops. This is important because these mechanisms can often quite simply be extrapolated and translated to other circumstances and therefore be used on a large scale to remedy some of the issues at play in secular, individualist, consumerist and post-industrial societies, such as the feelings of disconnection, loneliness, emptiness, isolation and estrangement discussed in the Introduction (compare Aldred, 2000: 339; D. Halprin, 2003: 78). With imagination, these insights can be translated to almost any non-dance situations such as schools, care homes, organisations for homeless people, trajectories of work reintegration of people who have been long-term ill, prisoners, people recovering from addictions,

teenagers and people with issues of low self-esteem. Key elements are re-establishing a positive sense of self and one's own authority, in combination with (and I believe that this is crucial!) reconnection to others, nature and the mysteries of life. These insights can help remedy the 'empty self' (Cushman, 1990) and nourish the "hunger in the human heart" (Van Jones, material for Pachamama symposium, quoted by Susannah Darling Khan, interview 28.01.10) so that we no longer need to be filled with images and experiences from the outside, but feel fulfilled with and inside ourselves.

In the last weeks of writing this thesis, I realised that the aims and ideals of *Movement Medicine* show many parallels to the philosophy of the Art of Living, of which Socrates is often thought to be the founder, but which was also contemplated by philosophers such as Montaigne, Nietzsche and Foucault (Epictetus & Lebell, 1995; Nehamas, 2000). These philosophers describe guidelines not for imitation, but as encouragement for people to "develop their own art of living." "Imitation, in this context, is to become someone on one's own; but the someone one becomes must be different from one's model" (Nehamas, 2000: 10). In this sense, *Movement Medicine* seems to be a contemporary expression of that legacy.

Aside from an interest to deepen the understanding of the relationship between dance and the Art of Living, there are several other threads in this thesis that can provide food for future research. Follow-up studies in *Movement Medicine* and other dance practices could, among other topics mentioned in this thesis, investigate for example the effect of ritual and community on processes of healing and transformation. Furthermore, the mechanisms of how movement in general contributes to gaining knowledge and insight can be studied or, in other words, how we can consciously explore "movement as a way of knowing." This may be interesting for the field of education and learning, to investigate ways of embodied learning and also for communities of practice in which learning can take place in other ways than through the traditional educational system. The intrinsic power of dance can be studied more closely, especially with regard to supporting the growth of whole human beings by integrating parts that have become separated or lost. Finally, the role of dance with regard to the search for and creation of meaning and experience of the numinous, mysterious dimensions of life can be further explored.

One last time I would like to stress that of course dance is not the medium of choice for everyone, and also that similar experiences can be accessed through many other activities. Nevertheless, I believe that *any* form of dance has inherent beneficial capacities such as the possibility to reconnect with self and with life in all its myriad forms, reconnect with joy, creativity and the flow of life force, and to find meaning and significance. Important for this is not necessarily the form, although this can help to create a space to explore these possibilities, but rather the *intention* with which we dance and the context in which this takes place (compare Hanna, 1988a: 163). This includes western club culture, contemporary dance, classical ballet, ecstatic dance, tango, salsa, belly dance, and, as I hope I have shown convincingly, *Movement Medicine*.

For now this particular journey is coming to an end. Slowly, the words and the music die down. On the dance floor, movements become stiller and quieter and finally stop all together. On these pages the words get fewer and fewer. As you have reached the end of this thesis, the dancers come to rest. Yet inside, the dance continues. Breathing. Feeling. Walking. Thinking. Expressing. Relating. The dance continues. As everything is a dance, the dance... continues... inside... the dance... continues... inside... forever... everywhere...





## **Appendix A: Research questions, aims and objectives**

What, in the experience of participants, is the contribution of dancing *Movement Medicine* to physical, emotional and mental wellbeing, and personal growth?

### **Main sub questions:**

- What are the key assumptions of this movement practice?
- What are the qualities, aspects or processes, that dance contributes to in the lives of participants?
- What characteristics or elements in the practice contribute to these qualities, aspects or processes?
- Does this practice contribute to a stronger sense of self, an increased connection to people and the dancer's environment? If yes, how? What is the participants' understanding of that?
- What is the role of embodied knowing and altered states of consciousness?
- Can participants translate and integrate experiences from the dance into their daily lives in a lasting way? If yes, how?

### **Research aims:**

- To provide a 'thick description' of the *Movement Medicine* practice.
- To unravel the contribution and mechanisms of movement as a tool for wellbeing and personal growth of participants.
- To explore in this process the role of embodied knowing, integration of aspects of the Self (body, emotions, mind, spirit), a sense of connection to people and the world around participants, and altered states of consciousness.
- To place dance and movement in a conceptual framework of ritual and bodily consciousness, and to further question the contribution of Movement Medicine to contemporary society.

### **Research objectives:**

- To analyse in-depth the individual dance experiences of informants.
- To interrogate to what areas and processes in life this practice contributes to, according to practitioners.
- To reveal the elements of the *Movement Medicine* practice which make this type of dance relevant and meaningful for participants.
- To examine practical tools gained through the practice, which help people live their life in a sustainable and harmonious way.

## Appendix B: List of attended *Movement Medicine* workshops

The last column, marked ‘#’ refers to the number of days that each workshop lasted. The three columns to the left from there indicate in what main capacity I attended each workshop:

P: Participant, T: Trainee (Apprentice, Teacher Trainee), A: Assistant.

### Phase 1: participant observation in most active form

Year	Workshop	Place	Teacher	P	T	A	#
<b><u>2006:</u></b>							
Sept.	Module 1 Ritual Ongoing group	Buckfastleigh, Devon	Ya’Acov	P			6
Dec.	Heartbeat (weekend)	Rattery, Devon	Susannah	P			2
Dec.	Module 2 Ritual Ongoing group	Buckfastleigh, Devon	Ya’Acov	P			6
<b><u>2007</u></b>							
March	Module 3 Ritual Ongoing group	Buckfastleigh, Devon	Ya’Acov	P			5
June	Module 4 Ritual Ongoing group	Buckfastleigh, Devon	Ya’Acov	P			6
Sept.	Initiation	Rattery, Devon	Ya’Acov & Susannah	P			10
Dec.	Recapitulation	Buckfastleigh, Devon	Ya’Acov	P			6
<b><u>2008</u></b>							
June	Vision Quest	Rattery/ Dartmoor, Devon	Ya’Acov	P			6
July	Alchemy of Stillness	Bern, Switzerland	Ya’Acov	P			4
Nov.	Resonance	Dundon, Somerset	Susannah	P			4
<b><u>2009</u></b>							
March	Phoenix	Orval, Belgium	Ya’Acov & Susannah	P			6
April	Awakening	Rattery, Devon	Ya’Acov & Susannah	P			5

**Phase 2: participant observation changed as I entered the trainee trajectory (Apprenticeship followed by Teacher Training) and also started assisting**

Year	Workshop	Place	Teacher	P	T	A	#
<u>2009 cont.</u>							
June	Module 1 Apprenticeship	Dundon, Somerset	Ya'Acov & Susannah		T		9
July	Module 1 Journey of Empowerment Ongoing group	Minehead, Somerset	Susannah			A	6
Sept.	Module 2 Journey of Empowerment Ongoing group	Minehead, Somerset	Susannah			A	6
Nov.	Module 3 Journey of Empowerment Ongoing group	Minehead, Somerset	Susannah			A	6
<u>2010</u>							
Jan.	Module 2 Apprenticeship	Dundon, Somerset	Ya'Acov & Susannah		T		8
March	Source ( <b>weekend</b> )	London	Ya'Acov			A	2
April	Awakening	Rattery, Devon	Ya'Acov & Susannah			A	4
June	Module 3 Apprenticeship, including Summer Long Dance	Dundon, Somerset	Ya'Acov & Susannah		T	A	10
Sept.	Initiation	Dartington, Devon	Ya'Acov & Susannah			A	10
<u>2011</u>							
Jan.	Module 4 Apprenticeship	Dundon, Somerset	Ya'Acov & Susannah		T		6
March	From Darkness to Light ( <b>weekend</b> )	Warsaw, Poland	Ya'Acov			A	2
	Rock my Soul ( <b>weekend</b> )	Amsterdam, the Netherlands	Susannah	P			2
April	The Way of the Dancing Warrior	Orval, Belgium	Susannah			A	5
June	Vision Quest	Buckfastleigh/Dartmoor, Devon	Ya'Acov			A	7
July	Module 1 Teacher Training	Dundon, Somerset	Ya'Acov & Susannah		T		7
July	Summer Long Dance	Dundon, Somerset	Ya'Acov & Susannah			A	5
Sept.	Initiation	Dartington, Devon	Ya'Acov & Susannah			A	10
Dec.	Module 2 Teacher Training	Buckfastleigh, Devon	Ya'Acov & Susannah		T		9

Number of days participated:  
(Phase 1 & 2)

180

## Appendix C: Research Invitation

This article appeared in the 'School of Movement Medicine' newsletter, in April 2008.

**Teacher or Participant? Newcomer or Old-timer?  
Man or Woman? Bold or Shy? Dreamer or Action-(wo)man?**

**All invited!**

**Would YOU like to share your dance experiences in an anthropological research?**

Wherever I walked, I danced. My bones have danced always. Over the course of 23 years I came in touch with many different styles and techniques. In 2006 the 5Rhythms™ and Movement Medicine became a fundamental part of my life, offering me a compass and many wonderful maps for exploring myself, and the world around me. The list of profound changes in physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of my life is endless, and I'm very happy to tell you more of my experiences another time (for a little glimpse you can see my contribution on Initiation in the October 2007 Newsletter).

This left me in great awe, and inspired me to do a PhD research in Dance Anthropology. In September 2007 I started this four-year project at Roehampton University in London. The research is all about people's experiences with Movement Medicine and the 5Rhythms™. Keywords are: personal growth & transformation, healing, mental & emotional wellbeing, body/mind/spirit, bodily knowledge & movement as a way of knowing, expanded consciousness, and creation of meaning in daily life. I hope to interview about 40 participants and 20 teachers, and to also examine individual dance diaries. Although I consider interviews as very precious gems in their own right, dance notes or logs are written in a different context, and therefore offer additional insights to interviews.

My dream is to write a book based on the stories and experiences of the dancers, which highlights their individual journeys and honours the mystery of this practice. So the treasure is with you! If any of the afore-mentioned themes stir something in you, and you feel inspired to share your story and to build together towards a greater understanding of this incredible dance practice, **please be in touch!** I will tell you more about the research methods and the way I work. For now it is most important to say that whatever you would share with me will be entirely confidential. I will not share personal details of your story with others, and you will not be identified by name, unless you express a wish to be.

For you it can be an opportunity to talk freely, be heard, organize your thoughts, associate wildly on the mechanisms of the dance, and receive a transcription of the interview. Your experience will be discussed in the PhD thesis and book, which may include quotations from your story.

Please contact me on:

[ekieft@gmail.com](mailto:ekieft@gmail.com)

+44 (0)1803 605 134 (Landline)

+44 (0)7 914 850 788 (Mobile)

(also for any questions, remarks or doubts you might have).

Thank you so much for considering this invitation! Looking forward to hearing from you!!!

Eline Kieft  
April 2008

## Appendix D: Research Background Information



School of Arts:  
Digby Stuart College  
Roehampton University  
Roehampton Lane  
London  
SW15 5PH

Assistant Dean Research:  
Prof Trevor Dean  
0208 392 3242  
T.Dean@roehampton.ac.uk  
For postal address, please see School of Arts  
details.

### Research Background Information

Thank you for your interest in my research. In this leaflet you'll find some background information about the project in general, the way I work, and the procedures involved. Please read this carefully. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask. I hope this gives you some idea of what to expect, should you decide to participate.

#### **About my motivation:**

Ever since I was seven, I've explored many different dance styles and techniques, and have been involved with the 5Rhythms™ for two years now. This has offered me a great map for exploring myself, and the world around me, and brought about significant changes in physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of my life. Hearing similar accounts from other practitioners, and reading about the transformational possibilities of dance, I am interested in exploring the 5Rhythms™ in greater detail. In combining it with anthropology, my other passion, I hope to learn more about the mystery of this practice.

#### **About the research:**

The research is about how dance can contribute to mental and emotional wellbeing, personal growth and transformation, and about connection to the world. Keywords are: personal development, healing, transformation, body/mind/spirit, bodily knowledge and movement as a way of knowing, expanded consciousness and trance, and creation of meaning in daily life.

The research will take about four or five years to complete. In this time, I hope to interview about 40 participants and 20 teachers, and do a number of workshops myself, so I can add a personal embodied experience to the information that people will give me. Also, I will study contributions to the newsletter of 'School of Movement Medicine', and hope that you are willing to consider sharing your dance notes with me. The results will be discussed in a doctoral thesis, which I hope to publish in book form as well, and possibly in some articles for journals and magazines.

### **IMPORTANT**

*I will not share personal details of your story with others. However, what you say about your experience will be discussed in the PhD thesis (and other possible publications), alongside responses of other informants. The thesis may include quotations from your interview (and/or dance log, should you decide to share that). But you will not be identified by name, unless you express a wish to be, and otherwise any information you share will be treated in strict confidentiality. Also, no references to third persons mentioned by you will be made in any publication.*

*I'm not aware of any risks that are involved in participating, although I'd like to say that, possibly, telling about your experiences might have a catalysing effect, like the dance workshops themselves. This could at the same time be a benefit, to get a different understanding of your journey so far.*

*If you decide to take part in this research, please be aware that you are free to withdraw at any point.*

*If you have a concern about any aspect of your participation, please raise this with me, or the Director of Studies, who is: Mrs. Dr. Andrée Grau, Phone No: +44 (0)20 8392 3372, Email: A.Grau@roehampton.ac.uk.*

#### **About the interview:**

- In the introduction before each interview, I will give you additional information on the research, in case you have any questions.
- Then I'll go through some practicalities with you, and mention some keywords, so you have a general idea of the direction of the interview.
- I don't work with a list of questions, because I believe that every experience is unique, and every story has its own way to unfold. Therefore, I will ask one 'open' question to get you started: "Would you please tell me about your journey / experience with 'The Five Rhythms'?" It's really about your personal experiences. Everything you want to share will be highly important, and there are no wrong answers.
- If necessary, I'll ask for additional information or clarification of something you say.
- As I wrote above, it will be absolutely confidential, and I will not share personal details of your story with others (especially not with the 5Rhythms™ teachers and participants).
- If you agree, I'll tape record the interview. Afterwards I'll transcribe it literally and send you a copy. Please read this carefully, and see if you wish to make any changes in the text, have anything to add, or would like to have parts not included. Only after you have given me your consent, I'll use the transcription officially as research data.

**About written personal accounts** (Optional):

- Through studying your notes, I hope to get an additional idea of your process and transformation throughout your dance experiences in a different way than through an interview.
- Again, it will be absolutely confidential, and no one but me would see what you have written.
- I would photo copy the diary and return it to you as soon as possible. You can paperclip certain pages if you don't want them to be included in the research/don't want me to see them.
- Alternatively, you could copy it yourself and give or send it to me at a time that is convenient for you. Again, you can always leave certain pages out if you don't want to share them. In case you've kept your log on the computer, it would be easy to just email the parts you are willing to share.
- As in the interview data, you can choose whether you want to remain anonymous, use a pseudonym of your choice, or your own name. Also no references to third persons mentioned by you will be made in any publication.
- I realise this is extremely personal and intimate. I will treat each diary with the greatest respect, as if it were my own. And if at any time you change your mind and decide against it, you can always ask me and I'll discard them as data.

**Contact & Feedback:**

In the process of the whole research, I'd like to keep in touch with you, to send you information on how I'm progressing, and on general ideas that will surface throughout the analysis. You are very welcome to give me feedback on it and I will try to incorporate your comment wherever possible. If you don't want me to keep you informed, or send you any updates on the research, please let me know.

Finally, I'd like to stress that, since I'm a practitioner myself, it will be very likely that we will meet on a dance floor somewhere. It will make absolutely no difference to the agreed confidentiality, but please consider if you are comfortable with this possibility.

Again, if you have any questions or remarks, please contact me on [ekieft@gmail.com](mailto:ekieft@gmail.com) or 07 914 850 788 (Mobile) 01803 605 134 (Landline).

Thank you so much for considering participating!

Eline Kieft



## Appendix E: Interviews Overview

### Alphabetically:

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	Anonymous	22.11.07, follow-up interview on 12.10.09
2	Anonymous	23.04.08
3	Anonymous	16.06.08
4	Anonymous	04.09.08
5	Anonymous	20.11.08
6	Anonymous	12.01.09, follow-up interview on 07.05.09
7	Elloa	15.01.09
8	Hans A.	26.04.08
9	Hans B.	04.09.08
10	Jo	22.05.08
11	Julia	20.06.08
12	Lunar	15.11.08
13	Maria	23.02.09
14	Mary	07.07.08, follow-up interview on 19.09.08
15	Mieke	26.04.08
16	Mirjam	22.11.07
17	Paloma	24.11.07
18	Rachel	18.11.08
19	Robert	18.04.08
20	Ruth	04.03.09
21	Sasa	04.09.08
22	Susannah	17.04.07, follow-up interviews on 15.05.08, 23.10.08 and 28.01.10
23	Tim	09.12.08
24	Victor	25.09.08
25	Ya'Acov	23.06.11

Please turn over for a chronological overview of the interviews:

(continued from previous page)

**Chronologically:**

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	Susannah	17.04.07, follow-up interviews on 15.05.08, 23.10.08 and 28.01.10
2	Mirjam	22.11.07
3	Anonymous	22.11.07, follow-up interview on 12.10.09
4	Paloma	24.11.07
5	Robert	18.04.08
6	Anonymous	23.04.08
7	Mieke	26.04.08
8	Hans A.	26.04.08
9	Jo	22.05.08
10	Anonymous	16.06.08
11	Julia	20.06.08
12	Mary	07.07.08, follow-up interview on 19.09.08
13	Hans B.	04.09.08
14	Anonymous	04.09.08
15	Sasa	04.09.08
16	Victor	25.09.08
17	Lunar	15.11.08
18	Rachel	18.11.08
19	Anonymous	20.11.08
20	Tim	09.12.08
21	Anonymous	12.01.09, follow-up interview on 07.05.09
22	Elloa	15.01.09
23	Maria	23.02.09
24	Ruth	04.03.09
25	Ya'Acov	23.06.11

## Appendix F: Participant Consent Form



School of Arts:  
Digby Stuart College  
Roehampton University  
Roehampton Lane  
London  
SW15 5PH

Assistant Dean Research:  
Prof Trevor Dean  
0208 392 3242  
T.Dean@roehampton.ac.uk  
For postal address, please see School of Arts  
details.

### Ethics Board

### Participant Consent Form

#### Title and brief description of Research Project:

*Dancing as a tool for Emotional and Mental Wellbeing, and Personal Growth: Anthropological Research on 'The Five Rhythms'.*

The research is about how dance can contribute to mental and emotional wellbeing, personal growth and transformation, and about connection to the world around. Keywords are: personal development, healing, transformation, body/mind/spirit, bodily knowledge and movement as a way of knowing, expanded consciousness and trance, and creation of meaning in daily life. Data will be gathered through qualitative interviews, participant observation and written accounts of participants. Results will be published in a doctoral thesis and possibly in book form, journal articles and magazines.

#### Name and status of Investigator:

Eline Kieft, MPhil / PhD Student Roehampton University

#### Consent Statement:

*I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings. I have read the leaflet "Research Background Information" and understand the implications of participating in this research.*

*More specifically, I agree to (please tick appropriate boxes):*

- ☐ Being interviewed (in person, over the phone, or in writing)
- ☐ Tape recording of the interview

- ☐ *Sharing my personal dance notes, log or diary*
- ☐ *The use of quotations in the PhD thesis in the following fashion:  
Anonymous / Pseudonym of your choice / Own name\**
- ☐ *The use of quotations in other possible publications such as book(s), and  
articles for journals and magazines in the following fashion:  
Anonymous / Pseudonym of your choice / Own name\**

*\*Please tick option of your choice*

Name:.....

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation, please raise this with the investigator, or with the Director of Studies, who is:

Name: Mrs. Dr. Andrée Grau

Direct Phone No: +44 (0)20 8392 3372

Email: A.Grau@roehampton.ac.uk

## Appendix G: Checklist Interview



DATE: TIME:

PLACE:

### I. START

#### **Personal details:**

Name: M / F

Address:

Telephone number:

Email address:

Nationality:

Education:

Profession:

Age:

Relationship to researcher:

5R experience:

Reason/Motivation to participate in research:

#### **Consent and Handouts:**

- ☐ Has participant received hand out Research Background Information?  
YES / NO
- ☐ Has participant received and signed Participant Consent Form?  
YES / NO
- ☐ Does participant agree with the use of tape recorder?  
YES / NO
- ☐ Would you consider sharing you dance notes with me for this research?  
YES / NO
- ☐ Publication: Anonymous / Pseudonym of your choice / Own name
- ☐ Does participant have any questions for me at this stage?

## II. INTERVIEW:

### Keywords:

mental and emotional wellbeing / personal development and growth / healing / transformation / body/mind/spirit / bodily knowledge / movement as a way of knowing / intuition / expanded consciousness / trance / creation of meaning in daily life / connection to divine, source, or 'spirit' / different teachers / difference mainstream and School of Movement Medicine

### Questions:

#### *For participants:*

- I. Would you please tell me about your journey / experience with 'The Five Rhythms'?
- II. What place does this practice have in your life? What does it contribute to? Did it set a process in motion? Trigger something? What are the keys to your experience?

#### *For teachers:*

- I. Personal practice as a dancer, heart of experience, key elements, see above.
- II. Teaching. What do you see happening on the dance floor? How do you facilitate that? How do you prepare and hold the space? Why do you think movement works? What is it in movement that can trigger insights, change, and knowledge? Does teaching give you additional insights to how and why the practice works? How so?

## III. AFTER INTERVIEW:

### Feedback:

- ☐ If extra questions arise when I transcribe your tape, can I ask you per email? YES / NO
- ☐ Are you okay for me to be in touch with you on research progress, and results of analysis during course of research? YES / NO

### Closing:

- ☐ Do you have any questions for me?
- ☐ Practicalities and thank you

## Appendix H: Guidelines for a ‘written interview’



School of Arts:  
Digby Stuart College  
Roehampton University  
Roehampton Lane  
London  
SW15 5PH

Assistant Dean Research:  
Prof Trevor Dean  
0208 392 3242  
T.Dean@roehampton.ac.uk  
For postal address, please see School of Arts  
details.

### **PART 1: personal details and questions regarding research**

Please fill in the following personal details and questions regarding the research set up. If you're not willing to share something, just leave it blank.

#### **Personal details:**

Name:

Gender:

Address:

(only if you want to receive transcript by post, otherwise just your email is fine)

Telephone number:

Email address:

Nationality:

Education:

Profession:

Age:

5R experience: (Waves, workshops, intensives, work with School of Movement Medicine)

#### **Consent:**

Please read the consent form and the background information before continuing. I sent them to you in attachment to a previous email. (If you want me to send it again, no problem, just let me know). It would be great if you can send the consent form back to me, per normal post, since I would need your signature.

#### **Publication:**

The information that you give will be totally confidential; no one but my supervisors and me will read what you share with me. It will most likely be used for writing my doctoral thesis, academic articles and probably a general (non-academic) book. You can choose whether the quotes I use from your information will be published under:

*your own name / a pseudonym of your choice / anonymous*

(please only leave the option that you choose, and delete the other two options)

### **Contact & Feedback:**

- If extra questions arise when I work with what you will send me, are you okay for me to ask these additional questions per email? YES / NO
- In the process of the whole research, I'd like to keep in touch with you, to send you information on how I'm progressing, and my general ideas that will surface throughout the analysis. You are very welcome to give me feedback on it and I will try to incorporate your comment wherever possible. If you don't want me to keep you informed, or send you any updates on the research, please let me know.  
Are you okay for me to be in touch with you during course of research in this way? YES / NO

If you have any questions for me at this stage just drop me a line per email, or phone me! [ekieft@gmail.com](mailto:ekieft@gmail.com), or + 44 1803 605 134 (landline) 07 914 850 788 (mobile).

Thank you so much for participating!

## **PART 2: Introduction and Questions**

Usually I start by mentioning the keywords that are the general guidelines for this research. You can read them here.

### **Keywords:**

Mental and emotional wellbeing / personal development and growth / healing / transformation / body/mind/spirit / bodily knowledge / movement as a way of knowing / intuition / expanded consciousness / trance / creation of meaning in daily life / connection to divine, source, or 'spirit' / different teachers / difference mainstream and School of Movement Medicine

### **Questions:**

My first question is always a very general one: Would you please tell me about your journey / experience with 'The Five Rhythms'? It would be great if you can start writing with this question and the keywords in mind. If you have difficulty getting started, you can ponder on questions like: What does 'The Five Rhythms' practice mean to you? When and why did it come into your life? What place does it have in your life? What does it contribute to? Does it help you with a specific thing



in your life? Did it set a process in motion? Or trigger something? What are the central *keys* to *your* experience?

If you run out on ideas through this and need more structure: these are the questions that I generally keep in my mind when people fall silent in a spoken interview. May be you have addressed them in your open answer to the first question, then you can just leave them, otherwise they might help you to elaborate on some topics in more detail. I really appreciate your willingness to do this, so please don't feel obliged to tick off every question and answer it in great detail. Whatever you want to share is greatly appreciated.

1. What do you experience while dancing?
2. What are your motivations to dance; do you have set goals for yourselves?
3. Does dancing affect your feeling of wellbeing? In what way?
4. Do you feel it contributes to personal growth? Does it strengthen your self-confidence? Your sense of identity? Does it give you practical tools that help you live your life more easily? How? What tools?
5. Does dance help to integrate body, mind, emotions and spirit? How and why?
6. Do you feel any healing / transformation taking place through dance?
7. Can you somehow access knowledge and information through dancing, which is harder to access through rational thought and thinking? Can you explain?
8. Is dancing somehow related to your intuition? How? Does dancing give you a sense of 'bodily knowing', a wisdom that you can access through your body and movement rather than through your mind? How do you experience this?
9. Have you ever experienced an expansion of their consciousness beyond your body? Can you tell me more about that experience? When did it happen, what triggered it? Does it happen often? Is this the same as 'trance' for you, or different?
10. Is dancing a tool that helps you create meaning in daily life? If yes, how do you experience that?
11. Does dancing give you more sense of connection with the world around you (nature, other (human) beings, maybe even the divine)?
12. Can you translate and integrate experiences from the dance into your daily life?
13. Do you experience any unwanted side effects and/or do have you been in situations in which dancing is counter-productive and leads to more stress etc.?
14. Are there any other contributions that dancing makes to your life as a participant?
15. How important is the role of the teacher for the dance experience? Can you describe differences? Do you feel that the 'School of Movement Medicine' has a different contribution to *5Rhythms™*? In what aspects do you experience these differences? Would be great if you can elaborate on this as much as you can.

16. Is there anything else that is very important for you in this respect, that hasn't been addressed by the questions I asked? Something that you absolutely want to share?

If any of these questions don't come 'through' to you, just leave them. They're really meant as an idea for you to write about your experiences.

Again, if you have any questions or remarks, please contact me on [ekieft@gmail.com](mailto:ekieft@gmail.com) or 07 914 850 788 (Mobile) 01803 605 134 (Landline).

### **PART 3: your answers....**

So, the first question and then empty space for you to take the floor....

Would you please tell me about your journey / experience with 5Rhythms™ and/or Movement Medicine?

## Appendix I: Interview Questions for Ya'Acov and Susannah Darling Khan

### The mandala:

- You wrote in the newsletter that originally when you received the sigil, each of the nine circles contained a symbol of one of the world's mainstream religions. Which were they and why did they 'disappear'/transform?
- In the process of learning to read the mandala, did these images and their meanings surface spontaneously or were they consciously chosen to fit well together?
- The mandala includes wisdom of many different traditions. How much of this symbolism is conscious, and how much a 'coincidence'? How do you see and work with the multiple influences (shamanic paradigm, eastern philosophies, Cabbalah?), and is that not confusing at times?
- Besides the mandala being a map of the Movement Medicine landscape, what other functions does it have? How do you feel it resonates with workshop participants (*not* apprentices)?
- Can you tell more about how your relationship with the mandala evolves?

### Healing, transformation, embodiment:

- How do you define 'healing'? What does healing mean to you? (Does everyone need it; if yes why? Diagnosis of western culture, or universal symptom? What is it that needs to be healed, to what does healing lead?)
- Can you tell me more about your interpretation and use of the word *medicine*? How is that related to the previous question?
- Do you see different categories of movement or embodiment in people?
- How do you see, view, observe transformation in participants?
- You write in your book that you completely recapitulated your whole personal history (p. 103). How did you know when you were done? What did that feel like? How did the quality of your life change after that?

### Wider cultural trends:

- How do you see the place of Movement Medicine in bigger spiritual and personal movements or trends such as New Age, Paganism, Human Potential Movement, New Spiritual/religious movements?
- What in your eyes, does Movement Medicine offer today's culture? What do people come to find at Movement Medicine dance floors? What is its contribution?
- If Movement Medicine is creating a culture (tribe) or is it part of a larger trend – what are, in your eyes, its values and cohesive elements?

Preparation & workshop design:

- How do themes for workshops arise and how do you work with these themes? Do new themes still emerge, or do you by and large feel that the curriculum will remain stable for a few years? Why do some workshops disappear [for example dancing with the devil]? How do you feel about the separate ritual modules since 2008, or 07???
- What do you do in preparation of a workshop a year, a few months, a few weeks, a few days in advance?
- What do you do when setting up the space? For yourselves, protection, calling help? Intentions? Smudging, etc and what is your reasoning behind this preparation?
- How much structure of a workshop do you plan in advance, and how much is left open or improvised? Do you work with a written guideline for each workshop, how detailed? Including what to say?

Other

- What, if anything, do you perceive as ‘shadow’ of Movement Medicine?
- How do you see the development of Movement Medicine from now on? Including your work being taught by other people?
- How do the four elements affect your musical choices? Do they play the same role as the rhythms in the 5Rhythms™ with regard to choice of music? What other criteria do you base your musical choice on (yin yang, themes etc)? You seem to use more live music; how do you relate this to using music recorded in other contexts?
- What in your view is the role of the Movement Medicine teacher? Skills, activities, etc?
- Anything you would like to address that I haven’t asked about?

Information questions

- Birth year Ya’Acov and Susannah
- Ya’Acov, where and when did you get your degree in visual communication?
- Susannah, where and when did you get your degrees in anthropology, gestalt and Family constellations?
- When did you both do the “be the change” training
- What’s the name of the African step we do in the big circle?

Business related questions

- Do you have a Broadcasting licence?
- Is selling cd’s a part of business/marketing strategy? Or is the shop separate from the workshop income? Where do profits from the shop go?

- Do you have a checklist of venues? What in your eyes is the contribution of a venue to a workshop? I've heard that in Syllt the food was a disappointment: would you discontinue organising workshops there?

Questions that have been asked by Christine Ottery, newsletter 07.09

- What is ecstatic dance?
- And this is all accessible through the dance?
- How is that possible?
- So it makes people linked into a sense of community as well?
- On an emotional and mental level is it like a form of therapy?
- From a purely fitness, physical point of view, is it something that the practice of doing the dance that's really healthy and good for your body? What are the benefits?
- The more you listen to your body, the more we can be aware of health problems?
- Do you think that ecstatic dance is growing in popularity?

## Appendix J: Codebook for qualitative analysis *Movement Medicine*

### 1 DANCE

#### 1-A Movement Medicine

- 1-A1 Aims
- 1-A2 Vision of Ya'Acov and Susannah Darling Khan
- 1-A3 Development of 'School of Movement Medicine'
- 1-A4 Differences Movement Medicine compared to the 5Rhythms™
- 1-A5 Landscape & Navigation tools
  - a Mandala/Map/Sigil/Logo
  - b 4 Elements
  - c 5 Dimensions of Awareness
  - d 9 Gateways to the soul
  - e At the Centre: the Phoenix in the Tree of Life, Yin and Yang
- 1-A6 Workshops
  - a Evenings  
(Move!)
  - b Weekends  
(Body Prayer, DanSing, Darkness into Light, Equilibrium of the Heart, For all our Relations, Fusion, Sacred Space, Source, The Holy Actor, Trance-Formations, Wild Life)
  - c Intensives  
(Alchemy of Stillness, Awakening (previously "Movement Medicine"), Dancing with the Devil, For all our Relations, Initiation, Phoenix Retreat, Resonance, Returning Home, Sanctuary, Space Between Us (previously Making Love), Summer Long Dance, Way of the Dancing Warrior, Wild at Heart)
  - d Ongoing Groups  
(Journey of Empowerment (previously Zero Zone, and Fundamentals of Movement Medicine), Ritual, S.E.E.R. process, Vision Quest, Burial, Apprenticeship Programme, Teacher Training)
- 1-A7 Business Approach 'School of Movement Medicine'
  - a Environmental awareness (encouragement of car share, train instead of plane travel, planting trees)
  - b Idealism (Attention and Support, Exchange and Reciprocity (Give-Aways, community building), Social Justice)

#### 1-B 5Rhythms™

- 1-B1 Aims
- 1-B2 Vision and Intentions of Gabrielle Roth
- 1-B3 Development of the 5Rhythms™ & Policy of Moving Center Schools
- 1-B4 Landscape & Navigation tools  
Flowing, Staccato, Chaos, Lyrical, Stillness
- 1-B5 Maps & Workshops
  - a Evenings  
(Waves, Sweat your Prayers)
  - b Weekends  
(Heartbeat)
  - c Intensives  
(Cycles, Mirrors, The Silver Desert)
  - d Ongoing Groups  
(Sweat your Prayers, Groups with core teaching staff, Teacher

## Training)

**1-C The Space**

- 1-C1 Location, place, set up, attributes (altar, DJ-desk), quality and comfort
- 1-C2 Personal preparation and travel to a new space
- 1-C3 Creating a Safe and Sacred Space (Temenos, Temple, Container)  
Preparation of space. Purifying with incense / feathers. Agreements with participants. Creating strong space together. Characteristics and Possibilities of a Safe Space (such as permission, feeling held)

**1-D Exercises**

Acceptance and Intention, Awakening the Dancer, Chamber of the Hearts, Chaos Circle, Cling/Withdraw, First Dance (or warm up), Gratitudes, Guided meditation or Journey, Incantations/Movement Mantra's, Integration towards home life, Inundate/abandon, M.E.S.A. work: micro-macro-meso, also light-denser-heavy, Partner exercises (Individual/pairs/threes/bigger groups, incl. experiencing the vicious power of gossip), Passing Obstacles or Obstructions, Phoenix Process and Transforming Stories, Repetition/Routine/Structure, S.E.E.R. Process or Recapitulation, Spoken teachings and philosophical input, Support groups, Tree of Life meditation, Video Recording and Feedback, Witnessing, Wise Elder, Yin Yang, Yoga.

**1-E Themes addressed in the Dance**

Feeling welcome in Life, Life cycles, Life history and ancestors. Masculinity - Femininity. Yin and Yang. Sexuality. Mortality. Boundaries.

**1-E Influencing Factors and Supportive Practices**

- 1-E1 Shamanism  
Shamanic Journeys, Ancestors, Elements, Cardinal Directions, Give-Aways, Medicine, shamanic healing, Spirits and Spirit World (Great Spirit (Benevolent Death, Arch Angels, Catcher Spirits, Father Sun, Grandfather Fire, Mother Earth, personal guardians, power animals, tree and plant spirits), Wheel of the Year (Equinoxes, Seasons, Solstices). Shape shifting. Speaking circle with Talking Stick. Trance.
- 1-E2 Ceremonies and Ritual  
Arrow ceremony. Burial ceremony. Fire walk. All night dance ceremony. Rites of Passage / Initiations. Ritual Theatre. Sweat Lodge. Vision Quest. Welcome Ceremony. Constellation Work Hellinger.
- 1-E3 Psychology and Gestalt  
(Ego Theatre, Default Modes and Understudies. Use of mantra's. Words have power)
- 1-E4 Pachamama. Change the Dream. Be the Change. Awakening the Dreamer
- 1-E5 Voice Work
- 1-E6 Role of Music
- 1-E7 Role of Nature

**1-F Individual Dance Experience**

- 1-F1 Personal Dance and workshop History
- 1-F2 Thoughts Ideas Expectations of a workshop beforehand, and of Movement Medicine in general  
Costs and High Commitment, Observations of other people and the practice, of other people's style and way of being. General thoughts like "people should dance more." Notions of "middle class-ness", meat market, weirdo's, hippies, always hugging, seekers. Also role models. Competition. Judgemental criticism: 'weird bunch of people': do I belong here?
- 1-F3 Personal Motivation to Dance  
enjoyment, exercise/work out, tools, socialising, meeting new people,

- enjoyable way of learning, sense of structure, exploring relationship body-mind, physical contact, sex substitute, fun, laughter, nonverbal-ness, music & feel good factor, spiritual quest, assumptions such as “it’s for individualists,” describing why other people come to a dance, pull or need to dance (“cannot live without”)
- 1-F4 Key experiences on the dance floor: To what has dancing contributed?
- 1-F5 Other things have similar (or better) effect  
Sports, playing an instrument, meditation
- 1-F6 Power of the Dance  
Strong points that make the dance effective, special or powerful. Also Pre-requisites to make it effective. Attention, concentration, movement, awareness, safe space, open heart, connection, the music, attention teachers, combination ritual, dance, psychology, voice work, combi transcendental and embodiment approach, dialogue inner-outer, relation body-emotions-mind-movement, repetition, presence, being, bodily character, fun, play, loving environment, sharing it with everyone, no onlookers. Nonverbal-ness. Effects of exercises. Movement as a Way of Knowing.
- 1-F7 Limitations of the Dance  
Shadow of the practice. Atmosphere (tyranny of niceness, smiling, pretentious). Competition, attraction, conformist. Difficulty with ritualistic, spiritual or transpersonal aspect. Inner process gets aggravated too much (dance always good, but class not always, class increases by its nature the things that are up, too catalytic, especially when person is not able to keep own boundaries). Lack of certain characteristics in this setting (lack of sharing verbally). Losing oneself in the dance with others / losing own space and sense of boundaries. Not able to follow own tempo. Teachers style that put people of (pushy, guru aspirations). Type of people that it attracts. Unsafe in the group or not feeling at home, feeling alienated. Hard work. Prescribed movement style.
- 1-F8 Qualities of a Dance / What happens on the dance floor  
Absence of Thoughts, Acceptance, Altered State, Awareness, Body Performance (Balance, Cramp / relaxed, Frozen / rigid body, Posture, Supple / stiff or tense, Tired / energised), Change in Dancing Style, Connection-Love-Oneness, touched by ‘divine source’, Dancing with specific Emotions, Dancing with pain or illness, Deconstructing/falling apart, Embodiment, Energy surge, Expression, Imagination, Increased sense of the senses, Insights (coin drops, Eureka. Aha Erlebnis. Revelations), Intimacy with self and others, Learning, Liberation, Presence, Release, Self-Discovery, Spaciousness, Stuckness/feeling imprisoned, Surrender, Vulnerability
- 1-F9 Movement description (details/vocabulary)  
*Being* moved, Bringing awareness and attention to something (body part or emotion), Change in practice/experience over time, Creating space (inside), Dance as prison, unhelpful, shaking, Dance has expanded/new dance, Expectations of how dance *should* be, Flow of energy, Hearing teachings only when ready, Impossibility to move, Movements (Rolling, jumping, skipping, immobility, being in a heap on the floor, yelling, screaming, hugging, stamping, resting in own spine, etc.), Moving with partner (fighting, flirting) / as group, Past lives, Physical expression of emotion or state in movement (moving with fear, moving to discover what’s going on, emotions catching up with you, link movement-emotions, dance as re-enactment gives increased palate of expression, etc.), Resistance, Taking risks (also in temenos)
- 1-F10 Physical state  
a Health / wellbeing  
b Ill health / suffering (Accident, Discomfort & Pain in specific body parts, Illness, Injury, Tension / tightness, Tiredness)



**1-G The Teacher**

- 1-G1 Role of the Teacher
- 1-G2 Differences between and characteristics of specific teachers (including '5Rhythms')
- 1-G3 Projections onto teachers (transferences, counter transference, authority, role models)
- 1-G4 Ya'Acov and Susannah Darling Khan working together

**1-H The Group**

Differences between specific groups or classes. Level of the group, beginners or advanced feeling to it. Also energy dynamic of the group. New group. Also distance to the group. Not belonging.

**1-I Other Dance Movement Approaches**

Authentic Movement (Mary Whitehouse, Janet Adler, USA), Biodanza (Rolando Toro Araneda, Chile), Body-Mind Centering (Cohen), Contact Improvisation, Halprin Process (Anna Halprin, Daria Halprin, USA), Latin American dances; salsa, tango, LivingDance (Danielle Fraenkel, USA), Rave/house/Club/Disco, Salsa, Social dances (ballroom and other partnered dances), Trance Dance (Frank Natale, USA), Whirling, Yoga Trance Dance (Shiva Rea, USA).

**1-J Metaphors for the Experience**

- 1-J1 Physical, Mental & Emotional Metaphors
  - Monkey Mind, Monkey on shoulder, Trying to see with back of head, Sword, Soldier
- 1-J2 Metaphors or language for the dance
  - Being danced, Dance as magnifying glass, Dance as medicine, Dance as metaphor for life, what happens on dance floor, happens in life, 5Rhythms permeates everything, = life (also before Gabrielle Roth named them), Dance as prayer, mediation, offering, Dance as prison, Danced out of my head [trance], Dancing in the black hole, Finding ones own dance, Horse and Rider
- 1-J3 Metaphors for process
  - "Plork" (Play and Work), Cauldron, Freezer, Human traffic, Shedding skin, Spreading wings, Washing machine
- 1-J4 Tree and Growth metaphors
  - Fertile soil, Seeds, Planting, Roots, Trunk, Branches, Leaves, Fruit, nuts (acorn blueprint), Nutrition and Light

**2 BODY AND SENSATIONS****2-A Taking care of the body**

- 2-A1 Personal pampering (hot tub, sauna, creams, gels, masks, etc.)
- 2-A2 Therapies & Techniques
  - Alexander technique, Bach Flower Remedies, Bioenergetics (Reich), Cranio-sacral therapy, Feldenkrais, Homeopathy, Intuition Magic, Manual therapy, Massage, Mensendieck, Osteopathy, Rebirthing, Regression Therapy, Reiki, Yoga
- 2-A3 Sports and other exercise

**2-B Body images**

Positive body image (enjoying, luxuriating), Negative body image (rejecting), Appearance (skinny, fat), Length (short, tall), Attractiveness (ugly or attractive), Gender / Sexuality, Clothes / Nudity

- 2-C Bodily Knowing / Body as medium to know, learn and unlearn**
- 2-C1 Body Memory / Body as container (stored trauma, emotions, in posture, tension, shape of emotions, rage in thighs, sadness in arms)
- 2-C2 Body as teacher (in touch with intuition, structure of body, cells, bones, tissues, muscles, journey through connection elements and body structure/metabolism)
- 2-D Breath**
- 2-E Chakras**
- 2-F Destructive bodily behaviour**
- 2-F1 Addictions (Food, Alcohol, Drugs, Sex, Caffeine, Smoking).
- 2-F2 Eating disorders (Anorexia, Bulimia)
- 2-F3 Neglect of Body and self-harm
- 2-G Embodiment and Disembodiment**
- Relationship to body. Being grounded. Rooted. Coming into the body, finding feet. Disconnection. Losing/lost touch with body. Having left my body. I'm no longer there.
- 2-H Changes regarding the body**
- Increased general sense of physical wellbeing, Being more present in the body (more embodied, realising when disembodies, and tools to get back in), Change in dance style, Change in dress style, Change in voice, singing, body gets a voice, Changed mannerism and posture, Energy Flow, Getting *all* body parts in motion, Increased energy levels, reclaimed lost energy, Looser and more relaxed, More aware of Senses, Relation to Body; different contact with body, bodily awareness, Sense of expansion (taller, grounding, wider, lighter, more consistent, denser, bigger, etc.)

### 3 FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

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- 3-A Emotional wellbeing – Emotional distress**
- 3-B Dealing with emotions**
- 3-B1 Free expression of emotions, giving voice to something
- 3-B2 Tools
- 3-B3 Turbulent – Tranquil time; (emotional roller coaster)
- 3-C Emotions**
- 3-C1 ALIVENESS freshness, vigour, energetic
- 3-C2 AMBITION aspiration, motivation
- 3-C3 ANGER aggression, rage, violence, grumpiness, fury, temper, touchiness, irritability, annoyance, volcanic eruptions
- 3-C4 ANXIETY frustration, pressure, tension, disappointment, resentment, bitterness, doubt, nervousness, hesitation, caged, torn, apprehensive, distressed, sense of foreboding, fretful, worry, restlessness, impatience, concern, dread, suspense, uneasiness, disturbed, troubled, obsessive mind chatter, being bothered
- 3-C5 APATHY inertia, lethargy
- 3-C6 AWARENESS awakening, presence
- 3-C7 CAUTION care
- 3-C8 COMFORT relief, satisfaction, respite, relaxation

<b>3-C</b>	<b>Emotions (cont.)</b>
3-C9	CONCENTRATION focus, determination, discipline, attention
3-C10	CONFUSION baffled, bewildered, mystified, perplexed, puzzled
3-C11	DEPRESSION hopelessness, meaninglessness, negativity, dark spiral
3-C12	DISGUST repulsion, revolt, offended, repelled, loath, aversion, dislike
3-C13	DISILLUSION
3-C14	EMPTINESS boredom, desolation, hollowness, void
3-C15	EXHAUSTION drained, knackered
3-C16	FEAR panic, shock, despair, terror, dread
3-C17	GRATITUDE appreciation, blessedness
3-C18	GUILT responsibility, shame, sinful, sorry, wicked, wrong, regretful
3-C19	HAPPYNESS light-heartedness, high spirited, cheerful, contentment
3-C20	INSECURITY inferiority, not good enough, lousy, useless, looser, futility, low self-esteem, stupidity
3-C21	INSPIRATION clarity, insight
3-C22	INTEGRITY honesty, truthfulness, fairness, fidelity, frankness, morality, sincerity, trustworthiness
3-C23	INTIMACY confidential, private, secret, internal, friendly, cosy, informal
3-C24	INTIMIDATION repression, invasion, guardedness
3-C25	JEALOUSY envy
3-C26	JOY pleasure, happiness, humour, laughter, play, bliss, delight, elation, airily, fun, enjoyment, euphoria, spontaneity
3-C27	JUDGING criticising, blaming (victim, martyr)
3-C28	LIBERATION state of freedom
3-C29	LONELINESS isolation, seclusion, solitude, alone, remote
3-C30	LOSTNESS feeling lost, not knowing, dealing with unknown, off the map, homeless, spaced out, not present, disappearing
3-C31	LOVE being in love, compassion, experience of oneness, connection, open heart
3-C32	MERCY forgiveness
3-C33	NEEDYNESS need for recognition, to be seen, needs not getting met, need to be accepted and liked
3-C34	PASSION yearning, attraction, arousal, excitement, desire, longing, flirtatious, sexy, stimulated
3-C35	PEACE inner peace, ease, easiness, comfortable, relaxed, mindful, calm, friendly, gentle, harmonious, restful, composed
3-C36	RECOGNITION comfort others have similar experiences, feeling seen
3-C37	REJECTION abandoned, deserted, forsaken
3-C38	REJOICE celebrate, glory, joy, jubilant, revel, triumphant, victorious
3-C39	RESISTANCE rigidity, inflexibility, adamant, obstinate, stiff, stubborn, taciturn, stuckness, frozen
3-C40	SADNESS grief, mourning, melancholy, wistful, heartache, misery
3-C41	SELF DISCOVERY self-acceptance, self-discipline, self-love, self-acknowledgment, self-esteem, self-hatred, self-righteousness, vanity, self-absorption (in constructive or negative way) being true to oneself, being oneself
3-C42	SENSITIVITY fragile & overwhelm, tender, weak, shock
3-C43	SENSUALITY bodily, of the senses, animal, carnal, physical
3-C44	SEXUALITY carnal, erotic, coital, genital, reproductive, lustful
3-C45	SURPRISE amazed, speechless, staggered, blown away by something, curiosity
3-C46	SURRENDER letting go, give in, give up, quit, relinquish, yield, capitulate
3-C47	SUSPICION distrust
3-C48	TRUST
3-C49	UGLINESS shadow, monstrosity

**3-D Changes regarding emotions**

Increased general sense of emotional wellbeing, Acceptance, Allowing space for awkwardness + increased sense of dark feelings, Cleansing, Healing body and mind and heart, Increased access to emotions + awareness, new relationship to emotions, Handling emotions and useful TOOLS to digest and direct emotions (also from past), Dealing with grief, trauma, abuse, accident, divorce, illness, childlessness, self-harm, marriage problems, transforming pain into love, Increased sense of 'happy' and 'good' feelings (humour, joy)

**4 SELF/MIND/PSYCHE**

- 4-A Insights in Personal Patterns  
(Default)mechanisms. Tapes. Sub personalities. Ego. Ego Theatre. Roles. Archetypes. Understudies. Including Projections towards teachers and other participants.
- 4-B Deconstructing  
Dark night of the soul / going through darkness. Falling apart, feeling totally lost, rebirth, newly constructed. Facing the unknown, the not knowing. Pushing beyond comfort zone. Repatterning.
- 4-C Dialogue Inner Outer  
Dialogue or contact inner-outer. External-internal reference. Interior-exterior, if one changes, the other changes too. Introvert-extravert.
- 4-D Healing, Transformation and Empowerment
- 4-E Self-discovery  
Self-development, self-confidence, self-esteem, self-love/care, self-criticism. Awareness of (wo)manhood, more feminine. Greater capacity to meet one's needs. Personal Discovery. Authority (Crown)
- 4-F Mind and Identity  
Intuition, Inner knowing, Memories, Power of the mind, toxic thoughts, mental wellbeing
- 4-G Changes and Becoming more of oneself
- 4-G1 Increased general sense of mental wellbeing and alignment or integration of body-mind-spirit-emotion, Acceptance of what arises without fighting it, Change from Introvert to Extravert, Coming to terms with something in the past  
Own unique identity more appreciated, compassion, coming into power, finding oneself, authenticity, authority, greater capacity and freedom to be who we are, peace within oneself, more present in the moment, healing Cartesian split, new vocabulary, new sense of purpose and direction
- 4-G2 Ego patterns: Discovering old patterns and habits and releasing them, Less ego, Insights in personal patterns and mechanisms, default mechanisms, tapes, sub personalities
- 4-G3 Increased sense of Courage, Insight in and skill to maintain boundaries, Insight in how to deal with situation
- 4-G4 Less struggle with External pressure, opinions, commercial adds and ideas, Rigidity in personality, Uncertainty, Worries / endless thinking or things that distract /take energy away
- 4-G5 Reclaiming parts of self, Trauma release AND Liberation of certain roles, rewriting personal history

## 5 SPIRITUALITY

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- 5-A Personal expression and experiences of spirituality (awareness, practices)**  
 Being on a spiritual path or journey, co-creation, Energetic management, Hermetic law as above so below, spiritual journey, magic, altars (at home), intuition, Meaning of life (Calling, Vision, Dream, Vocation, Task, Purpose in Life), meditation, Mystical or Peak experience; oneness with divine, with nature / connection to nature, Mythology and Storytelling, Reincarnation & past lives, ritual, precognition, soul, spiritual search or quest for meaning, synchronicity, transcendence/immanence, trance, trust in life
- 5-B Reference to other religions / spiritual or mystical traditions/cosmologies/esoteric practices/systems**  
 Alchemy, Astrology, Buddhism, Christianity, Divination, Hinduism, Islam and Sufism, Judaism and Cabbalah, Mediums / Oracles, Nature Based traditions (Wicca, witchcraft, Druidry, high magic, paganism, shamanism), Tantra. Yoga.
- 5-C Dance as Spiritual Practise**  
 as prayer meditation offering (spiritual practice)
- 5-D Change in spirituality**  
 Increased general sense of spirituality, Feeling one with the world around, openness, Connection to nature/environment/land, ancestors, spirits, spirit world, universe, planets, divine, Contact with core essence, soul, Discovering ones dream, vocation, purpose, Expanded consciousness, Meditation in movement, Seeing with different eyes; seeing the divine in everything and everyone, Touch of beauty, lightness, elevation, brightness, Trust in life, Turning point, Initiation, life never the same anymore

## 6 SOCIAL INTERACTION AND CHANGE

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- 6-A Children, parenting and pregnancy**
- 6-B Partner**  
 Anything to do with Primary Love Relationships. Falling in love / new relationship. Boyfriend / girlfriend. Marriage, partnership. Also Divorce or Relationship Crisis. Even Past Life Relationships (see also 1-H7 Qualities of a Dance).
- 6-C Family**  
 Parents. Grandparents. Siblings. Extended family. (Ancestors under 1-E Shamanism or where relevant under 1-E Psychology and Gestalt).
- 6-D Friendship and Colleagues**  
 Companionships (also in dance). Colleagues at work
- 6-E Dance Community**  
 Community. Feelings of belonging, home, oneness, family, community, tribe, my thing! Being with like-minded people, no outsider anymore. Missing the group after an intense workshop. Connection to other participants, bridging gap between self, others. NOT to environment in this code. Also interaction with Ya'Acov and Susannah, as teacher-participant, or teacher-organiser etc.

- disconnection and alienation  
support
- 6-F New skills and changes in social interaction  
Boundaries. Conflict resolution & assertive-ness (“this is what I want;” clear expression; standing up for oneself). Improved communication skills. Increased authenticity in relationship. Intimacy, sexuality

## 7 LIFE AND BEING IN THE WORLD

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- 7-A Activities, Actions and Events**  
Change of Residence. New Course or Studies. Wedding. Funeral. Hospital. Things related to money and finances.  
Hobbies and Inspiration. Art and Creativity. Crafts. Gardening, being in Nature. Music / Playing an instrument. Travelling. Painting. Drawing. Dressing up.  
Writing, Literature, Poetry; also writing dance diary or haiku’s during course.
- 7-B Another Way of Living Life/Changes in Living Life**  
New vocabulary, able to name things differently, life is shifting, changing, never the same anymore, viewing things with different eyes, turning point, surrender, home life changed
- 7-C Dance and Daily Life**  
Integration of dance in daily life. Prominence of dance practice at home; rituals, 21 gratitudes, built in/inseparable. “What happens on the dance floor happens in life.” Also impossibility to share experiences with outsiders, impossibility to translate.
- 7-D Job Purpose Vocation**  
Career switch. Calling, Vision, Dream, Vocation, Task, Purpose in Life, Finding own way, path.
- 7-E View on Life, culture and society**  
Ability to manifest, create, focus. Celebration of life; Path of Joy. Creation of meaning; creating own reality. Decision-making. Choice. Trust. Grace. Abundance. Focus. Intention. Issues of Power. Synchronicity. Environmental awareness. Emancipation Feminism (Feminine / Masculine). Politics and awareness of crises in the world. Values.
- 7-F Life Cycles**  
Birth, Childhood, Teenage, Maturity, Old Age (also growing older, acceptance, example in older women/men on the dance floor), Death and preparing for death (Acknowledging our mortality).

## 8 REMARKS ON THE RESEARCH

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### 8-A Comments and Remarks from Participants

Expectations, Comments on Eline as researcher, Comments on the research project and/or methodology and approach, Interviews, Expressed or visible emotion during interview, remarks on own process, Suggestions for improvement/alteration of the research

### 8-B Comments and Remarks from Researcher

As under 8-A and furthermore: notes on participant observation

## 9 ADDITIONAL RESEARCH DATA

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Address Details

Age

Education

Gender

Impression and Ambience

Source Material

(Diary, Email, Interview, Newsletter, Intentions for Integration, Haiku's, Incantations, Other)

Intentions for the Dance and Intentions for a workshop

Preparatory homework

Interview (Face to Face, Telephone, Written)

Motivation to Participate in the research

Nationality

Participant/Teacher

Profession

Publication Anonymous, First Name only, Full Name, Pseudonym, Other

Relationship to Researcher

## Appendix K: Unwrapping the Researcher: The Soul as Research Tool

This appendix aims to introduce the person *behind* the researcher by reflecting on personal values and motivations, so attempting to bring some of the unconscious above board, both that of myself and of the research. In the first part I will introduce the weaver who sat at the loom of this thesis, describing the ‘brought selves’ that came along with ‘researcher-based selves’ (Reinharz, 1997), in other words, my ‘individual modal states’ (Samuel, 1990). In the second part I will follow some of the suggestions of Romanynshyn (2007) in an attempt to understand and include the Soul of this Work.

### *Part 1: The Soul of the Weaver*

*... A dancer: dance, dance, and always the dance ...*

I started dancing when I was seven, and never really stopped. Dancing gave me a sense of purpose, of connection, of stability. I have come to understand it as my nourishing life root to health and creativity, and as my personal mode of expression. The professional dance training I undertook (see footnote 5, Introduction), shaped me in many different ways. It instilled in me an enormous sense of discipline, and yet I also felt like a fish out of water at the stifling, competitive environment of the dance academy. I missed intellectual challenge, social awareness and a spiritual element, and being 17 years old at the time, I could not see that the dance was so much larger than performing on stage. It took a long detour to find that out. When I quit the academy, a small statue of Lord Nataraj, a manifestation of the Hindu God Shiva as ‘Lord of the Dance’ fell on my lip. The scar is still there. I took that as a reprimand, as a warning sign for cutting myself off from this vital essence or life source. However I never really stopped dancing, except a ‘pause’ for the first two years at university, when I had to work hard to catch up with the other students. My joy for the dance returned, working with



Lucette Bletz, a classical ballet teacher in Leiden, and Joan van der Mast, a contemporary dance teacher in The Hague. When I moved to England, several people independently recommended the *5Rhythms*<sup>TM</sup> to me. From the first class in 2006 I felt very much at home and I kept a dance diary as I felt the potential for research and a deep urge to write about this for a wider public.

The dance is a very strong part of me. It is always here, always accessible and, at risk of sounding cliché, I am literally dancing with and through life. If I move my hand this way, or that, the whole world seems to shift: both my internal world and my relationship to the world around me. It is about quietly listening inside, moving emotions, and connecting with people, nature, spirit and ‘the great mystery’. Dancing, I feel the space between the molecules, a tangible connection to the web of life through my being a moving, living, breathing body. An awareness of my hips and the point between my shoulders as ‘anchors’ that receive and send information. That is what the dance is becoming for me. It is as necessary for me as breathing. It is what connects me to my life force, my vitality. It connects me to my roots, it is my practice. It helps me making sense of my life and the world around. And although it is so private, so quiet, so still, a part of me just cannot wait to share my love and passion for the dance with as many people as possible. Who knows what new chapters will be opened after finishing this thesis?

*... An anthropologist and researcher ...*

I first became fascinated by anthropology when I was still at Rotterdam Dance Academy, through dancing Eastern European, Middle Eastern and African styles, and wondered what dance styles say about the culture they originated in. However, I curiously forgot all about that for the next eleven years, completing my MA in Cultural and Medical Anthropology in 2001. As a (mostly freelance) researcher in social science from 2000-2005, I conducted qualitative research on health and wellbeing of various subgroups, including mentally disabled people, patients with chronic bowel disease and burnout, connected to universities, private research institutions and NGOs in the Netherlands. As I thoroughly enjoyed doing research and writing, I investigated various ideas for PhD topics. These included the use of

complementary therapies such as homeopathy and acupuncture in western biomedical GP practices, the beliefs and behaviours around sexuality of mentally disabled people, the acknowledgement of indigenous (shamanic) knowledge featuring quantum physics and other cutting edge scientific discoveries a la Jeremy Narby (1999 [1995]). The latter idea felt most intertwined with my personal interests, and I intended to explore this further during a course called ‘Soul in Nature’ at Schumacher College, Devon. However, I received more than I signed up for. As Cypher says to Neo in the film *The Matrix* (by Andy and Lana Wachowski) when Neo will be ‘unplugged’ from the system: “Buckle your seatbelt Dorothy, because Kansas... is going bye bye!” Nothing will ever be the same afterwards...

... *Life [thrown]*

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At Schumacher College, I was introduced to several basic shamanic techniques, and had some incredible experiences with spirit and consciousness, facilitated by Christian de Quincey, Stephan Harding and Jonathan Horwitz. Among these were for example a journey through time as carbon atom based on James Lovelock’s Gaia theory (see for example: Lovelock, 2000), conversing with a stone after a Goethean Science morning and a shamanic journey to the same stone after which I wasn’t able to move my legs anymore, and receiving teachings from a tree. Through these exercises I had profound experiences of inter-connectedness, and any sense of separation between the natural world and me disappeared forever. It shook the foundations of my general beliefs and assumptions, and I had to ask myself: “If this is possible, what else is?” The rational, objectivist framework in which I grew up, suddenly became too narrow, either ridiculing certain experiences or ignoring them completely. It was as if I had travelled not just simply to a quirky holistic educational institute in Devon, but to an enchanted magical realm where time elapsed differently, where three weeks actually felt like three years... This was followed by an intense time of deep, radical and sudden changes in my life.

*... A searching soul ...*

I would describe myself as a modern day seeker, feeling at home with ancient and contemporary, western and non-western notions of nature based traditions. One of my most fundamental beliefs, or rather body-based experiences, is of deep interconnection with all creatures. Through my shamanic journeys and many ceremonies in nature, I know that in essence there is no difference between me, my neighbour, the animals, plants, elements and even stones whom we co-share this planet with (compare de Quincey, 2002, 2005). This leads to respect for all manifestations, as my actions influence all other (life) forms. This requires a balance (an ongoing lesson to learn!) between all polarities we can imagine, and negotiating feelings of discomfort, when I take the airplane to see my family, as I cannot afford sustainable travel at the moment.

I furthermore subscribe to a conscious 'evolution of the soul', an active process of getting to know myself more and more intimately throughout life, and trying to let go of obstructing patterns and thought forms, a very conscious and alive awareness of Jung's process of individuation (Jung, 1971 [1959]: 275-89; 1981 [1921]: 448-450). This aims at having the Self rather than the Ego "in the drivers seat," while at the same time acknowledging the Ego's discriminative and protective values. This requires self-honesty to recognise the foul, the dark, the rotting, the ugly, and trying to include that by dancing with the sharks as well (I love the song "Bring 'Em All In" by Mike Scott).

Sometimes, the journey through emotions and feelings is so uncomfortable that I want to run and hide. On the other hand, it also requires gentleness and kindness, self-acceptance and compassion, and learning to give myself permission to be all I can be, do all I can do, as much or as little as possible in each moment, including making mistakes! I have an overall intention to always be travelling towards wholeness, while respecting the speed and intensity with which I can do that. And finally I realise that I can only see what I'm ready to see (to all who see and know my countless flaws and blind spots!). Stories, symbols and mythology have, as long as I can remember, helped me on this journey. Authors such as Tonke Dragt, Paulo Coelho, Clarissa Pinkola Estés, Philip Pullman and many others have an ongoing

influence in my life, as have films that depict the hero's journey in epic form, such as *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Matrix*, *Gladiator*, or *Robin Hood*.

The yearning for a soulful life is also expressed in finding, refining and fulfilling my personal vocation, as I believe that each individual has a specific task or role to perform or a question to answer in each lifetime. By miraculous design (I leave it open who does the designing!) one is equipped with the skills and motivation necessary to perform this task, that your task is intertwined with what you most enjoy doing which comes down to Campbell's notion of "following your bliss" (Joseph Campbell & Moyers, 1988: 113). Ironically, this drive and strive for meaning is very Calvinistic (see Turner, 1982: 38), which I recognise in my not so distant ancestral heritage.

*... Integration of passions: stepping stones for the future...*

Very soon after meeting Ya'Acov and Susannah Darling Khan, I realised that if ever they would do a teacher training, I would love to be part of that. This PhD project was therefore, apart from a longing to immerse myself long-term in a subject I felt passionate about, a pragmatic stepping-stone on my way of becoming a movement (medicine) teacher. I hoped it would earn me a living until I was ready to teach, with something that would further build on my education in anthropology, combining my passions for both anthropology and dance. I also designed it to be congruent and intertwined with and supportive of my personal, emotional and spiritual development, to be a contribution to integrating body, mind and spirit in western culture, and finally as an exploration of what people consider meaningful and how they (re) negotiate the sacred. As mentioned in the Introduction, halfway through my PhD, I did indeed become part of the first circle of Apprentices in 2009, which was followed by the 'Teacher Training' in 2011, which coincided with the last months of the research. On teaching my first class however, in October 2011, I realised that my teaching will need to find its own roots, as my work needs to resonate with my own soul. After five years of *Movement Medicine* being my space for personal growth, my professional training and the topic of my PhD, this led to a new inquiry into the nature of *Movement Medicine*: movement as medicine

without the attached cosmology. Nevertheless, I experienced frustration and disillusion, and fear of nearly being there and possibly not being able to see it through, both the PhD and the teaching. The PhD then gave me the distance to appreciate *Movement Medicine* from a different perspective.

### *Part 2: The Soul of the Work*

According to Romanyshyn, the research topic “chooses you as much as, and perhaps even more than, you believe you choose it” (Romanyshyn, 2007: 348). If this is true, the research did not come together just because of my interest in doing a PhD that would meet my personal soul search, my journey to become a movement teacher and my need for a solitary job, but there would be other reasons that this research came into a concrete form. As a psychoanalyst, Romanyshyn uses words such as a ‘complex,’ ‘unfinished business’ and ‘wounds’ in the researcher’s life, together with a possible ‘family complex’ and/or ‘cultural-historical issues’ which all may be at the root of the research, claiming the researcher as their ‘spokesperson’ (Romanyshyn, 2007: 348). I am not altogether comfortable with these words, as to me they seem to emphasise a problem, something unhealthy, as indicated by the name of Romanyshyn’s book, *The Wounded Researcher*. However, I also understand that research benefits from the researcher ‘owning’ their unconscious drives and motivations. My interest in pursuing this approach was largely to discover whether the research had unexpected things to say to me, unexpected angles to explore, so that my understanding of the hidden currents of *Movement Medicine* could deepen. Using Romanyshyn’s guidelines and format (2007: 348-51), I investigated some of the different unconscious aspects of the research.

### *The Vocational Aspect*

Apart from the big impact of my decision to not pursue a career as a professional dancer, I cannot distinguish other pieces of unfinished business, personal wounds

or traumas, a generational complex or a cultural-historical issue. As outlined above, quitting the dance academy initially did cut me off from my perception of roots and connection, my creativity and my natural way of expressing myself in the world. Furthermore, my deep passion for the dance, the drive to understand more of the mystery, the magic and the power of the dance seem to come from a very deep level, which certainly have motivated this project. Finally, following a PhD trajectory seemed the most suited work arrangement that I could think of, which took into consideration both the elements that were of interest to me and the framework in which this could take place, for example largely working from home in relative solitude. I did not spontaneously become aware of any “unconscious vocational claim of the work” (Romanyshyn, 2007: 348). Dreaming about and conversing with the research only started after I read *The Wounded Researcher*. Becoming more conscious of the vocational aspect of the work slightly changed my approach, as from then on I actively sought a dialogue with the research, and integrated my dreams about and dances with the “spirit of the research” into the research activities and analysis. I hoped throughout that indeed my work was in service to something or someone other than myself, being raised in a family where a Calvinistic work ethos and ideal of contributing to society is held high. This hope motivated me on days in which the research did not flow naturally (2007: 348-9). During one of my shamanic journeys before I started the research, the spirit of the Earth, Gaia, urged me to “never stop dancing with spirit beings and nature.” I took this as an invitation to literally keep dancing with spirit and nature, but also metaphorically to continue my inquiry into the nature of dance and life. The research is an extension of that invitation.

### *The Transference Dialogues*

The ‘transference dialogues’, modelled on the concept of active imagination, can help gaining insight in which aspects belong to the researcher, and which belong to ‘the other’ or “the stranger in the work by whom the researcher is addressed” (Romanyshyn, 2007: 349). In a ritual space the researcher invites “the soul of the

work” to speak. There are four possible levels in this transference field at which the researcher may be questioned (ibid.).

*Personal Level: Is there anyone from my family, my history, my biography who has something to say about this work?*

Different voices come through via my paternal ancestral line, ranging from an initial disapproval from my grandmother Heintje of me attending the dance academy at age ten, as everything of the body and the flesh was regarded with caution, to great uncle Hendrik, a practical farmer who with his ‘dance of the milk cans’ displayed a theatrical, playful joie de vivre. My dad then grew up with the body as unquestioned tool, to earn the proverbial daily bread in sweat and perseverance, hardly allowing for a sense of pleasure nor recognising the body as a source of knowledge. He has closely been involved in the research by reading and discussing most of my work, but also by venturing out on a his own dance journey during a five-day *Movement Medicine* workshop which included a 48-hour ‘Long Dance’. There we danced together for the first time, which moved both us and many of the 170 other participants, as well as concrete dances with our ancestral line. He said afterwards: “I wish I’d known before that dancing brings such joy!” So this may have brought some unintentional healing as a side effect of the research.

From my maternal ancestral line I know very little beyond my mother, who has always loved dancing, both as art and as practice. She brought to our family the love for culture and the arts from the ‘big’ city Amsterdam, and encouraged and enjoyed my explorations in any form of dance. As a nurse, she is familiar with bodies in all sorts and states, with excrements and death, with blood and wounds. However, her connection to her own body and to the world through the medium of movement is tentative but growing.

*Cultural-Historical Level: Is there anyone from another gender, race, class, culture, and/or historical time who has something to say about the work?*

During this part of the transference dialogue three voices spoke, which I identified as representations of the Cartesian Split, of Calvinism, and of Sacred Dance. The Cartesian Split voice said that this work contributes to healing several chasms in our western culture, between body and mind, between body and spirit, and between science and religion. It contemplated the possibility of emotions as different but equal tools to the rational mind. The Calvinistic voice came across as quite uncomfortable, but curious. Curious to the possibility of a celebration of the senses and of the body, to the possibility of dance as medium to be with god, and to an embrace of the sacred in every day life. The Sacred dance voice, resonating with ancient times, reminded me of current places where the dance is still honoured as sacred and of the important role of dance in many rituals around the world, past and present. This includes shamanic healing ceremonies, ecstasy cults in ancient Greece, sacred circle dances, the witches dancing naked around the fire, and even Christian Shakers, Quakers and Pentecostals.

*Collective-Archetypal Level: Who are the guides of this work? For whom is this work being done?*

I asked for guidance from Gods, Goddesses and Spirits of the Dance as known under many, many names: Nataraj, Dionysus, Terpsichore, Artemis, Eurynome, Hi'iaka, Laka and Pele, Bes, Bastet, Hathor, Iduna, Oya, Oshun, Ratu Kidul, Uzume, Ama-no-uzume, Huehuecōyotl, Ozomatli, Tezcatlipoca, Xochipili, Huehuecōyotl, Xochiquetzal, Macuilxochitl, S'anolxmulalt, Cernunnos. I asked them to grant this work their breath, for the wellbeing of all existences. One evening on a dance floor (10.09.09), I invited all beings that felt involved in this research to come and dance with me. A mixture of beings representing parts of my personal (research) psyche and possible of the bigger research appeared. Lord Nataraj told me that the dance of creation and destruction, the dance of doing and undoing are close connected, and that we all have our connection to cosmos, which



can be accessed through, among other things, the dance. Butterfly felt her cocoon shaking and growing hot, and then with an excess of movement, stretching, she broke free. First sitting still, then spreading her wings to and fly!!! Young deer appeared, similarly, just out of the womb, with its feet entangled, slipping on his wobbly legsies, clumsy without coordination, telling me that it takes time to learn, to remember, that which we all know, deep inside... There was an Alchemist, sitting in front of the fire, waiting for the connection between spirit and matter to emerge. Hermit, this lonely wanderer with a little light, illuminated the way through the darkness. Lady Birch spoke of delicacy and strength, and the Fool just jumped about with a big grin on his face. Writing this, I am tempted to leave out the Phoenix, rising from its own ashes, as the imagery feels so theatrical and dramatic. What do these beings and images say? Do they tell me about the research, or about my relationship with it? I dreamt about it too, many a time, including Einstein making me a desk to write at. Dancing each morning I connect to these images, and to my love for the dance that feeds my joy of this research.

*Eco-Cosmological Level: Is there anyone among the other creatures with whom I share this planet who has something to say about this work? Do the trees, animals, etc. have something to say?*

This is a work that shows and emphasises interconnection, a realisation that is ultimately beneficial for all beings. We are enriched by meeting other consciousnesses, which gives us courage to live in times of pollution, destruction, and isolation, when nature is becoming smaller and smaller and less alive, slowly dying to itself, and to humankind. Dancing is a way to include and integrate opposites, especially through the symbol of the circle that, through its very nature, connects polarities on different sides. Indeed, circular understanding emphasises *relationship* instead of separation.



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